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A BENEDICTINE

OF THE

SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

ABERDEEN:
A. KING AND CO., TYPE MUSIC, CLASSICAL, AND GENERAL PRINTERS,
CLARK'S COURT, 2 UPPERKIRKGATE.

A BENEDICTINE

OF THE

SIXTEENTH CENTURY

(BLOSIUS).

BY

GEORGES DE BLOIS.

23639 d.

TRANSLATED BY

LADY LOVAT.

" It is a manner of confession at once frank and ingenuous to praise that in others which is lacking in ourselves."

—(Letters of St. Jerome.)

LONDON:
BURNS AND OATES.
DUBLIN:
M. H. GILL & SON.
1878.

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INTRODUCTION.

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MYSTICISM IN THE WORLD.

I HAVE undertaken to write the life of a Benedictine of the sixteenth century, to give an account to Christians, desirous of knowing the glorious traditions of the Monastic Orders, of the life of one of those humble authors whom public indifference has hitherto left in the obscure corners of our book-shelves. I should wish to relate in a manner worthy of these heroes—now forgotten—how, having enriched their country with useful works, they did not confine themselves to the narrow circle of their chosen studies, but went forth to fight against all dangerous doctrines, bad examples, usurpations, and weaknesses, and how they exercised their inexhaustible charity upon all sufferings and wrongs, and, in fine, how they fulfilled to the uttermost the admirable rule of the Patriarch of the West.

I have chosen as type a monk unknown to all

who have not studied mystic theology, and whose obscurity is so far singular that he was the friend and counsellor of a great monarch,[1] and that his works, which were of widespread influence over the enlightened epoch of the Renaissance, can compete for elegance and charm with the best of its productions.

The moment has come, it appears to me, to reveal to Catholics the treasures they possess, and to reply to the scriveners of unbelief with the touching history of the acts of our forefathers. Montalembert, in describing the origin of the Monastic Orders of the West, has already put new life into the glorious figure of St. Benedict, and the strifes and grandeur of the champions of England and France; his graphic pen has engraved in our hearts precious recollections of the first monasteries for women; with him we have greeted the glorious features of St. Bernard—true type of the French character—set in the majestic framework of the Crusades, when illness and death arrested the hand of the writer, at the very point of his history, which of all men he was the fittest to relate.

Who can presume to take up, after him, the narrative of those chivalrous times? It would indeed require erudition as thorough as his, and as

[1] Charles V.

great a power of production, to aspire to the honour of continuing his work.

Others of more modest pretensions, but of no less merit, have thrown fresh light on the lives of the most celebrated mystic writers, and we owe to M. E. Cartier, the friend of Dom Guéranger and of Lacordaire, a charming study of St. Catherine of Siena, and the marvellous history of blessed Henry Suso's life. It would be impossible to give too much encouragement to the publication of those lives of Saints, which were the source of the truest pleasure to our ancestors, and of which we still find copies, quaintly illustrated, in almost all old-fashioned houses. But our forefathers saw in these annals, what an author above suspicion[1] calls "a chronicle, too little appreciated, of the true greatness of man". It is, then, only fair to memories hitherto despised or ignored, that the share they have taken in the moral and material progress of a country should be ascribed to them.

"To speak of influence exercised by the Saints," says Mgr. de Ram in his preface to "The Saints of Belgium," "is in the eyes of a great number of people to profess a paradox, or at the very least to show great weakness of intellect. And yet this so-called paradox, and so-called weakness are undeni-

[1] Baron Ernouf.

ably justified in almost every case by history. Let us confine ourselves to Belgium, and give a rapid glance over it, passing from town to town, and from village to village, and we shall nearly always find the name of some holy person connected with the origin of this or that town, or village. There is hardly an inscription upon any of our ancient establishments in which the history or legend of some saint is not recorded. If we question our national traditions they will tell us that formerly such a district was a desert, that holy people took up their abode there, at whose word the wandering tribes were converted, that they settled there, and commenced a new era of civilisation. Whilst some cleared our forests and cultivated our lands, others contributed to found our chief towns. They provided schools of emulation in letters and the fine arts, refuges for penance and prayer, for the sick and the infirm. The influence they exerted over the destinies of the people was always of the most beneficent character, and by the natural ascendency of their virtues they tempered the brutality and harshness which had previously ruled in the homes of the people, and in the institutions of their countries. The soil of Belgium is everywhere imprinted with the names of the saints who have trodden it, and who have

left upon it traces of their powerful influence. We find at each step some legend, often obscure but never forgotten—the legend with its sweet perfume of piety and poetry—which reminds us of the work of regeneration accomplished by the labours and prayers of the saints!"[1]

"If we see," adds Montalembert, "pure waters, a majestic peak, a dense forest, we may be sure that religion has left her mark upon it by the hand of a monk. . . . Wherever monuments of the past shall be interrogated, the memory of the monk, and the scarcely effaced traces of his labours, his greatness, and his benefits shall stand revealed."[2] For me, in the restricted outline which I have traced out for myself, the perfection of the model serves but to alarm my inexperience, but I shall be sustained by the desire to prove that this reform, which raised the cry of the worthlessness of monks, and which denounced the fundamental corruption of the clergy, was to meet as adversary one, whose form, if less imposing, was the equal of Wilfrid or Columba in purity and austerity. Doubtless, many abuses had crept into the Observance, and many monks deserved the reproaches which were levelled at them, and which Dante puts in the mouth of

[1] Monsignor de Ram. *National Hagiography.*

[2] Introduction to the *Monks of the West.*

St. Benedict himself, but the best proof of the vigour of the old monastic stock is, that Louis de Blois succeeded, in a time of agitation of every kind, of moral depression, and disciplinary relaxation, in restoring if not the strict Observance of St. Benedict, for that had to be mitigated to suit the increased weakness of the human race, yet at least a severe and powerful rule in the Monasteries of Hainault.

Louis de Blois—more commonly known by the name of Blosius—was born just as the furious struggles of the sixteenth century broke out. Alone among his contemporaries he discovered the secret of finding strength in sweetness, that virtue which, as St. Francis of Sales says, exceeds all others, being the very flower of charity.[1] At which fountain, therefore, did he draw that unction of tenderness, which is the most characteristic feature of his works? In the study of mystical theology and of the ascetical writers.

Before coming to his life, therefore, we feel bound to give an outline of that Christian mysticism, which delighted Fenelon and Bossuet, though ignored by the present generation.

Mysticism, or mystical theology, is the science of that intimate relationship which exists be-

[1] Introduction to *A Devout Life.*

tween God and man. To discover the date of its origin, one has to go back to the birth of the human race, to the very moment when God's grace elevated man to Himself in the earthly paradise. Before sin had defaced the image of the Creator in the soul, the most perfect harmony reigned between soul and body, the first governed the latter without a contest. Adam's sin disturbed this equilibrium. The soul, being no longer in command of the body, could not without many struggles rise to the heavenly regions, and was obliged to re-conquer her empire with hard and obstinate fighting. My object now is to give a rapid sketch of this triumphant warfare in which anchorites, monks, and martyrs will successively take part.

"Mysticism may be looked upon from two points of view, on the one hand it is deeply rooted in the very nature of man, on the other it extends to regions wholly above it. It is in these last relations that it receives its character and form from religion, and makes a part of it. Mysticism, therefore, is eminently Christian, and the doctrine of Christianity should have a profound influence on its development. Is it not likewise the object of Christianity to produce in each man as far as possible that which was accomplished in our model, Jesus Christ? Mary conceived her divine Son in a

heavenly rapture, and the prophets had announced her coming, and contemplated the principal events of her life many centuries before her birth.

"His working was mystical, and nature recognising a Master in Him, obeyed with docility. Thus it is that we see Him walking on the waters, scattering the tempests, curing the sick, attacking Death in its own dominions.

"This divine virtue of our Saviour, by whose very emanations all who approached Him were healed, did not re-ascend to Heaven with Him. He has left it with His Church on earth, and has made it the prize and recompense of a holy and supernatural life. It is He, then, Who has instituted Christian mysticism, and Who has given us in His life the most perfect model of it. He desired after His death to traverse all parts of the invisible world, so as to enlighten those sombre regions with His brightness, and to enable man to walk with a firm step along those gloomy paths.

"Limbo, where the Patriarchs were expecting His coming; Hell, into which the proud and rebellious spirits had been hurled; Heaven, with its wonderful choir-composed Hierarchy—all in turn beheld Christ, the Conqueror of death, sin, and hell.

"In sending the Holy Ghost to His Apostles on

the day of Pentecost, our Lord communicated to them the mystic powers which resided in Him."[1]

Next to the Apostles, God deigned to single out those innumerable souls, who, weary of the tumults of the world, sought rest in the deserts of the East, as the special recipients of these divine gifts. Palestine, Syria, the districts watered by the Euphrates, and above all, the valley of the Nile, were the favourite resorts of the first Anchorites.

That mysterious stream which fertilised their country, and whose sources were to remain unknown until the present day, was ever presenting to those fervent souls the image of man's life on earth. Living in the midst of Pagans, whom they astounded by the empire they exercised over their rebel natures, these hermits, but lately themselves leading the corrupt life of refined luxury of the Romans of the day, now gave to the world the marvellous example of the effects produced by Christianity, then still in its birth.

Others have told in inimitable words of the struggles, the mortifications, the heroism of those bands of which every soldier was worthy of being the captain, and where victorious tribunes, or the loudly applauded rhetorician of the Forum might

[1] *Mystique Divine.*—Gœrres.

have been discovered hidden under the coarse habit which they had assumed.

Before long, others besides soldiers and orators were attracted to this focus of supernatural life; the most distinguished women of the Roman nobility, the daughters of the Scipios and the Julius,—tore themselves away from a life of refinement in Rome, broke asunder their dearest ties, their tenderest affections, and came, surrounded by their daughters, to contribute a touching page to the history of the first ages of the Church, which was to be immortalised by the pen of St. Jerome.

These magnificent souls, brought together in the land where our Saviour died, and mutually encouraging each other to the acquisition of perfection and divine love, were to leave to posterity numerous monasteries, lasting rules of holiness, and a name which, after fifteen centuries, still lives in men's memories.[1]

Whilst the anchorites were disputing inch by

[1] Lacordaire terminates the short dedication which he puts at the head of his manuscript life of St. Dominic with the following words :—"May one of your nephews, in discovering it some day among your patrimony, know that he had for relation a woman in whom St. Jerome might have found a friend, such as he found in Paula and Marcella, and to whom nothing was wanting but a pen sufficiently holy and illustrious to describe her as she was." He knew not that the same filial piety which put these touching words into his mouth was to inspire Madame Swetchine's biographer with eloquent words, and was thus to realise his prayer by an impulse of

inch the ground with Paganism and their own flesh, and receiving by degrees the plenitude of divine favour, the Christians remaining in the world had battles almost as hard to fight; the Church of God, having been founded in poverty and persecution, was to propagate itself and take root in the same manner. Paganism, now divided into two principal sects—that of the Epicureans, who were slaves of the senses, and of the Stoics, who were slaves of pride—had entered into alliance with the empire in order to crush out the new doctrines. This moribund people, whose taste for blood civil wars, the amphitheatre, and the blood of a conquered people had failed to satiate, still thirsted for that of the Christians. Thus it was that God allowed these martyrs to participate in the unspeakable graces which He had bestowed on the Fathers of the Desert, and gave to them an abundance of those gifts which the hermits had only received in measured quantities. The power of flesh and blood seemed suddenly broken down in the midst of tortures. Then at once the soul was raised to the very height of spirituality, and, the first sufferings over, pain seemed to give place in these Christian heroes to a state of ecstacy in which they tasted ineffable

love and charity. See the beautiful letter of the Count de Falloux to the Count de Montalembert, on the death of Madame Swetchine.

consolation. Calm and inspired words were then put by God on to their lips, and St. Felicitas, surprised in her prison by the pangs of child-birth, explains well the cause of this patience. "How," said the gaoler, hearing her cry out in her sufferings, "wilt thou be able to bear much greater agony, if thou endurest this with such difficulty?" "This suffering," she answered, "is my own; the other is God's, and He will help me to bear it." And St. Cyprian, questioned by the martyr Flavian on the pains of the torture, answers, "When the soul has given itself wholly to God, the body feels nothing".

Defeated in the amphitheatre, Paganism began to seek other means of arresting the victorious and triumphant march of the new ideas. Neo-platonism was all that enlightened pagans, who disapproved of violence and bloodshed, could set up in opposition to the Christian religion.

Borrowing their principal ideas from Oriental dogmas, these new adepts founded a school whose basis was a sort of pantheistic eclecticism, combined with mysticism.

But God permitting at this time that the works attributed to the celebrated Denis, the Areopagite,[1] who was converted by St. Paul, and by him conse-

[1] We possess the following works of St. Denis, the Areopagite, the book of "Spiritual and Material Things," the book of the "Celestial Hierarchy," and that of the "Ecclesiastical Hierarchy".

crated first Bishop of Athens, should come to light, they answered triumphantly these abettors of false doctrine, and gave to the Church her first code of mysticism. The ancient thrones of the East and West, meanwhile, were trembling on their foundations, their miserable destinies were about to be accomplished, and out of the immense abyss wrought by the billows of the Germanic invasion and that of the Huns, a new era of prosperity and happiness was about to arise in Europe—now regenerated by blood. The Church, at first buried under the ruins of the old world, had soon, by her inexhaustible vitality and her marvellous activity, gained over these barbarians, the unconscious instruments of God's designs, and transformed them by her divine influence.

Borrowing peaceful conquerors from among these nations, she went about sowing everywhere the seed of the inspired word, and covering the earth with the ruins of Paganism. Meanwhile, the mysticism of the hermits of the desert had time to develop itself, and to pass from the east to the west. From the middle of the fifth century, it had found in the Emerald Isle a refuge from Roman corruption, and St. Patrick had there, in return for the generous hospitality of its people, presented them with the treasure of the Faith.

At once the savage manners of the islanders were softened, schools and cloisters rose up from the ground, and in the midst of war-embroiled Europe, Ireland alone prospered in peace, gave a multitude of saints to the Church, and carried by the hand of its monks the torch of truth into Germany. It was about this time also that St. Benedict, the great mystic authority and Thaumaturgus, promulgated that immortal rule, the disciples of which were to cover the Church with glory, to give her a marvellous succession of great bishops, great Popes, and great saints, and to spread itself with incredible rapidity from the south to the north of Europe.

The hour of ruins and destruction was over, and the West beheld the establishment of the sovereign Pontiff, whilst moving slowly forward to the glorious though fleeting times of the Empire of Charlemagne. Whilst practical mysticism proceeded in its wonder-working way, speculative mysticism continued to develop itself, and the works of Denis the Areopagite were commented upon and translated. Scotus Erigena, one of his translators, who was held in great honour at the Court of Charles the Bald, undertook the systematic study of this science, and in doing so was not able to avoid the quicksands of Pantheism, "which he brought out,"

says Gœrres, "with a sort of innocence and candour which explains to us the opinion held by his contemporaries concerning him, one of strong admiration, which was nevertheless not unmingled with doubt as to his orthodoxy".

The partition of the great Empire meanwhile had weakened Christianity, and the nations awaited with feelings of deep anxiety the end of the first thousand years which was, they said, to witness the end of the world.[1]

The people of Europe, fortunately mistaken in their fears, trusted once more in the future, and mysticism, sharing in the progress of religious ideas, also received a fresh impulse. It was a signal, as it were, for a universal renewal in Church as well as in State.[2]

This epoch, so memorable and interesting to Frenchmen, received its complete expression in the person of St. Bernard.

[1] Merimée does not fail to attribute in his *Archæological Studies*, this rumour to the venality of the clergy, who made use of the terror caused by it to distribute and sell a large number of indulgences.

[2] One of the most memorable disputes perhaps in all history, by reason of the nature of the interests engaged in it, took colossal proportions in the case of Gregory VII. and Henry IV. of Germany; the result of the quarrel about investitures was the enfranchisement of the ecclesiastical powers by the re-establishment of the celibacy of Priests, and the reform of the religious Orders.

This wonderful man, consecrated to God from his tenderest years, was the recipient of Heaven's choicest gifts. By his eloquence, of which his works give some idea, and which was absolutely dreaded on account of its persuasiveness by his contemporaries, he induced all the members of his family to embrace a religious life. Sent by St. Stephen to found a new colony at Clairvaux, he exercised an immense influence upon all who came near him. He refused the highest dignities of the Church, and saw in turn all the master-minds of his time bow down to him. For nearly half a century St. Bernard travelled over France, from the North to the South, and even into Italy, preaching as he went; a true hero, whom populations came out to greet with acclamation at the gates of their cities, and of whose judgment the most powerful princes stood in awe. At his touch the sick were everywhere healed, his very look and voice moved sinners to repentance, whilst the purity of his interior life shone through his actions, and converted souls to God. The name and memory of this great monk will, in truth, ever be connected with that outburst of generous faith which gave rise to the Crusades. There it was, above all, that the mystical life reached its climax, and this epoch has its

character impressed upon it from the beginning to the end.[1]

What riches did not this society, transformed by the voice of monks, disclose ; mysticism indeed enlightened not only the highest, but all ranks and classes down to the lowest !

Christianity, in entering the family circle, whilst giving to woman her primitive dignity, and to the slave his liberty, had substituted charity and the affections for the grosser appetites of the senses.

Liberty, at once human and Christian, raised the status of man, and drove him by a secret but vigorous impulse to seek for strength in union with his fellow-men.

Thus it came to pass, that at the same moment there were seen to spring up in all quarters, and in all professions, powerful corporations, whose strongholds the revolution, after undermining them long, had much difficulty in destroying.

The same interests which elsewhere gathered the chivalry of a country round their king, with us prepared France for unity, by joining in one common cause interests too often at variance.

[1] "It is impossible not to perceive," says Gœrres, "in all the Institutions, and in the movement and direction of thought at this epoch, the impress of a profound mysticism. Moreover, the two Ideas which determined the movements of this same epoch, the Papacy and the Empire, were in themselves and in their mutual relation to each other of an entirely mystic character."—Gœrres, Vol. I.

The compact between our kings and their nobles existed for eight centuries, and though some few proved traitors, thousands of faithful followers, blending their love of the House of France with that of their country, were ready to seal it with their blood at Bouvines, at Denain, at Marignan, and at Fontenoy.

Then was seen springing up that flower of chivalry, which was ever found ready to succour the weak, to redress wrongs, and to punish oppressors.

Nor was the Church behind hand; religious orders united in prayers and good works, and vying with the knights themselves, combined ere long under the same rule the duties of monk and soldier; and when it was found necessary to oppose a barrier to the Koran, and to snatch the Holy Places from the Mahommedans, it would have been hard to decide which played the more heroic part, the Crusader fighting in the train of the Allied Princes, or the austere Religious, who passing from the bed of sickness to the ramparts, presented their breasts armed with the Cross to the surging billows of Islamism.

Art and science also began to grow into fresh life like the rest.

Art borrowed the graceful forms of Oriental Architecture—"One column was added to another,

until becoming more slender as it grew, it was able to rise to a height till then unknown. In its heavenward ascent it put forth branches right and left, which assumed the form of an arch. Then these arches, meeting and embracing, produced the lancet or pointed arch, which soon took the place of the ancient cupola." [1]

Science also gained much in these numerous and distant journeys; its domain increased, schools flourished, and God reserved to His Church the introduction of the two great forms of St. Thomas of Aquinas and Dante into the religious glories of the 15th century.

The first, under the cover of a rigorous logic, gave to mystic theology a form at once tender and profound, whilst he developed his vast knowledge in magnificent language; the second, transported by his love into the highest regions of poetry, had his genius steeped in the salutary, though bitter waters of sorrow and exile.

At the same time, there appeared from the pen of an unknown solitary, whose name and footsteps have been sought for in vain—that heavenly book, "The finest," says Fontenelle, "which has proceeded from the hand of man," which was to dry up so many tears, supply an answer to so many troubles and

[1] Gœrres.

anxieties, and to which all the world has given the name of "The Following of Christ".

Shortly before, St. Francis of Assisium and St. Dominic had met in the fraternal embrace of peace and love, which was to prolong itself through many centuries, and the Church had never been richer, or more prolific in children. Monasteries were multiplied, and their common influence raised the standard of piety, whilst in certain parts of Europe rare and precious flowers flourished in the obscurity of the cloister, embosomed in a pious retreat, far from the world which had loved them, whose lives were fit subjects for a poem, could a pen be found, sufficiently pure and chaste, to write it.

To Germany, in the 14th century, appeared to belong the privilege of a glorious succession of mystical writers. Proud of having possessed St. Hildegard, the friend of St. Bernard, and St. Gertrude, whom God Himself initiated in the secrets of His divine heart, Germany produced at the same time, both Elizabeth Staeglin,[1] the spiritual daughter of the Blessed Henry Suso,[2] and Hed-

[1] First Abbess of Mount St. Rupert at Binghem on the Rhine.

[2] Suso was born at the commencement of the year 1300, in German Swabia, and came of an illustrious family of Berg. He embraced religion at the age of thirteen, and it was not long before he attracted the attention of his Superiors by the austerity of his life and the eloquence of his discourses. The account of the morti-

wige of Gundeksheim, whose barbarous parents refused her to the Lord.

The precursors of Blosius, Thaulerus and Suso, both belonging to the Order of St. Dominic, spread their doctrines in Swabia and at Strasburg, whilst Rusbrock[1] (the Admirable), attracted numbers of the faithful of all countries to Vauvert, to receive from his lips the highest maxims of spiritual life.

The 15th century, less rich in subjects, was nevertheless deeply influenced by this marvellous succession of Saints, and beatified souls; and the Rhine School of mystical theology was held in honour, at the time of Blosius' birth, through all the monasteries of Germany, Belgium, and France.

At the distant sounds of the storm which was about to burst over Europe, and to bring discord into the bosom of the Church, by attacking her

fications which he inflicted upon himself, and which, according to the Bollandists "were more admirable than imitable," should be read in the beautiful work of E. Cartier. His entire life belonged to the order of the supernatural, and his works bear tokens of his constant communication with God.

[1] Rusbrock took the name of a village on the Sambre at Brabant, and became Prior of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine at Vauvert, near Brussels. He died in 1381, and was honoured by the title of "the Admirable," and the "Divine Doctor," by the whole of Germany. Surius, the Carthusian, has given an edition of his works in Latin, translated from the Flemish in 1692.

authority, and by giving up her laws and mysteries to the private interpretation of reason, true Religious felt the necessity of seeking knowledge at the fountain-head, to study there the works of those courageous mystic writers, who in past times had triumphed over error and evil. Encouraged by the example of those who had gone before them, they prepared to enter the lists, in which, "as at first, good and bad angels were to meet together. We know the result of their encounter; the good prevailed, the abyss was closed for two centuries, and the 16th century survived." [1]

But it will be said, is it possible that this dry narrative will find acceptance in an epoch which rejects the supernatural, which denies the miracles of the Saints, which refuses them the unquestionable part which they can claim to have had in the moral and material prosperity of France?

To whom is this page of mystical history addressed, "when the very name of spiritual writer, that name, which recalls and embraces the most sublime and tender offices of religion, excites the contemptuous pity of the proud minds of our century? And we are not alluding here to impious sectarians, but to men who, thinking themselves to be religious-minded, yet dare to treat this divine

[1] *Studies on the Collection of the Acts of the Saints.*—Dom Pitra.

science, which has made the Saints what they are, as pious reveries, fit only for weak and credulous souls."

Years have passed since the state of the public mind in France inspired the then submissive Lamennais, and heard this melancholy reflection.

Two revolutions have covered France with ruins, we have had to undergo profound humiliation from the foreigner, and the terrible remark of Tacitus can be justly adapted to the fatal year which has seen our mourning: *Annum opimum variis casibus, atrocem prœliis, discordem seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace sœvum*,[1] without France having understood the necessity of a public acknowledgment of error, of rejecting with scorn the atheistic doctrines which prey upon her, of imposing silence upon their apostles, and of once more openly resuming her ancient motto: "Vive le Christ qui aime les Francs".

And yet these same apostles of Positivism have betrayed, without their intending it, that dissatisfaction which belongs to human nature, which is never perfectly satisfied by what it can see and take hold of, so that the Count de Champagny, in his courageous and ingenious reply to M. Littré, was able to say:—

[1] They conclude the touching pages which the Comte de Carnè has consecrated to his son's memory.

"The instincts of humanity are immutable, they stand in need of earthly things indeed, but besides these they have other wants. That cut-and-dried science, which is strictly limited to the study of matter, and considers facts only, without ever tracing back their origin to the supreme cause, will never suffice to satisfy humanity. Man requires other satisfaction and exercise for his reason, other consolations in his life, other hopes in his sorrows, other flowers wherewith to honour the graves of his fathers, other songs to sing by the cradles of his children.

"He too, Auguste Comte, has felt it: this man, whom you call master, whose panegyric you have written, experienced in the latter period of his life what you call a mystical reaction, strange and confused it certainly was, in which he made himself high priest, performed religious services (services without a God!), and passed days in reading the 'Following of Christ,' together with the works of his favourite poets."[1]

Yes, whatever is said on the subject, the soul, notwithstanding the revolts of its gross outer covering, notwithstanding the coarse and material theories which declare thought to be a secretion of

[1] Comte de Champagny, in his answer to Littré, at the reception of the French Academy.

the brain, will ever return to its Creator and Father, and Auguste Comte will neither be the first nor the last in the mysterious list of those who, having long rejected the waters of life, shall aspire in the last moment of agony and suffering to moisten their lips in them.

"The secret craving after a nameless want," says Madame Swetchine, "will be ever mingled with man's struggles here below. More minds than we might imagine would gladly proclaim the beauties of the divine law, and the magnificent order of its dispensations, if by the side of these splendours which enrapture the poet, and of those speculative truths which captivate the philosopher, there was not also found the austere school of morality, the duties of self-sacrifice and humility."[1]

The history, which I am about to place before the reader, is that of a life entirely consecrated to duty, the hero of which sought as much as was possible to destroy every trace of that life in the world. Assisted by wise counsels, and encouraged and sustained by valuable sympathy, I have attempted to bring to light the meek and noble figure of a Monk of the past.

Guided by the Bollandists, who have dedicated a long and beautiful notice to one who was a pro-

[1] *Upon Resignation.*—Madame Swetchine.

moter of their work, I have gathered around his memory all the facts of any importance which relate to the history of his monastery.

The startling death of one I loved, whose profound erudition and special knowledge of the subject would have been of great service to me, suspended for a time my labour. I have resumed it with the idea that those who are no more still pursue us with their sympathies, and encourage us to devotion to a memory which was dear to them. I offer it then to those who are left behind as a proof of attachment to all our traditions. I offer it to French Catholics who have themselves been able to see that the race of Saints and of great Monks, even in the 19th century, is not extinct, and to those children of Saint Benedict whose cordial and touching reception transported me to the times when "The fruits of the sacrifice, the gifts of repentance, and the legacy of sorrow,"[1] had not been confiscated, and where those who preceded them practised so largely the hospitality enjoined by Saint Benedict, and so diligently exercised by his sons.

[1] *The Monks of the West.* Introduction.—Montalembert.

LOUIS DE BLOIS

1506-1566.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS OF LOUIS DE BLOIS.

WO years only before the birth of Saint Francis of Sales on the 7th of January, 1566, died, at the Abbey of Liessies, a holy Abbot of the name of Louis de Blois,—worn out before his time by mortifications and contentions. Sprung from an ancient family so identified with France that there was not a day of glory or of reverses in its history of which one of its members was not witness, the son of parents as pious as they were illustrious, he appeared, to use the words of the Prophet Isaias, "to have been chosen and adopted by the Lord from his mother's womb". His Father, Adrian de Blois, Lord of Jumigny, son of Gérard de Blois and of Anne de Hemstede, derived his origin from the Lords of Châtillon-sur-Marne, of which one branch had taken root in Hainault; his mother, Catherine de Brabançon, daughter of John

de l'Ardemois, and of Marie d'Enghien, belonged to a distinguished family whose descendants have acquired a European reputation for wit and talent which serves to adorn still further their illustrious origin.

Louis was born at Donstienne, (of which his mother was the Châteleine), at the commencement of October, 1506, almost at the same time that the leader of the Reformation, who was afterwards to cause him so much heartfelt sorrow, and to be the motive power of so many of his admirable writings, received the priestly consecration at the foot of the altar.

Like all the young men of his day, he was brought up in manly fashion amongst his brothers, passing from study to violent exercises which gave strength and suppleness to the body, whilst they tempered the energy of their young characters. "Nature," one of his biographers who belongs to the order of St. Benedict tells us, "adorned him with all good qualities, both of mind and of body, which combined marvellously, not only to throw fresh lustre on the noble blood which ran in his veins, but also to serve the ends of the noble career to which God had called him. He had a meek and candid soul, and a docile mind which lent itself readily to the study of both human and divine sciences. But

what touched the heart of all was a gentleness of character, which he had, so to speak, sucked in with his mother's milk, or rather received from heaven, and which he preserved through life."[1]

What was to become of this child? According to all probability, faithful to the traditions of his house, he would buckle on the sword, and offer his services to his country, and unfortunately the army was too often but a sorry school of morality for a young man. The first years of the 15th century, though still instinct with the virtues of chivalry, "that first opening of human sentiment purified by a faith divine," yet foreboded ominously the storm which threatened Europe, and the grand crisis which was then in course of preparation. War, carried from province to province, and even from nobleman's house to nobleman's house, took away much from that peaceful, chaste, and loyal spirit which characterised the homes of the ancient nobility in the 16th century, and was at that time their portion and distinguishing mark.

Louis's mother, who understood all the value of first impressions and examples, watched with special care over this child which heaven had confided to her care, in the same way as the careful gardener places his most highly-valued plant in an atmos-

[1] The Bollandists.

phere both soft and mild. She did not forget, amongst her son's first studies, to instil into him by fervent admonitions the indispensable treasure of the faith, which Christians in those troubled times did well to place above all other things.

In this she succeeded fully, and if it was given to her to see Louis's elder brothers high in authority, and honoured with the confidence of their sovereigns, *her* claim upon posterity will be for having communicated to this child that zeal for God's cause, and love of souls, which made him a saint.

Thus, how often do we not find at the side of the great servants of God one of those sublime incarnations of love placed there by Him to establish them in virtue, and support their first footsteps, whom history for the most part consigns to oblivion, as it did Catherine de Brabançon, but who sometimes leave their mark on posterity, and are then known by the names of a Monica, or a Blanche of Castile?

Shall we also add that another was to go forth from this home consecrated to the practice of Christian virtues—a young girl, Louis's companion in childhood, who renouncing all the joys of this world was to come, as St. Scholastica did of yore to St. Benedict, to ask of her brother to be associated in his interior life, and thus to blend in a sweet and

holy union, under the same Observance, the grandeur and beauty of their supernatural vocation?

We will not, however, follow Louis's brothers and sisters along their different paths. Let it suffice to mention that his brothers added to the glory of their house by their military exploits, as well as by a constant faithfulness to their sovereign, and by an honourable discharge of their important duties to the state.

William, the eldest, was counsellor and officer to Mary of Austria, Queen of Hungary,—who was also Regent of Belgium in the name of her brother, the Emperor Charles V. Adrian, the second, was much distinguished in the army, and was made administrator of Avesnes and Charlemont, whilst his brother Richard commanded at Beaumont. Adrian, surnamed like one of our modern celebrities "the soldier's father," could boast of having never beaten a retreat, and of having by his name alone struck fear into the hearts of the enemy he went out to fight. Richard[1] was of a melancholy temperament, and having become quickly disgusted with court life and its honours, he came to seek near the Abbey of Liessies, under a rule of sanctification and prayer, the happiness promised to peaceful souls. Charles was

[1] Richard's nomination by his brother Louis to the post of bailiff is still preserved in the archives of Lille.

Canon of the celebrated church of St. Lambert at Liege, and Provost of St. Martin.

Two of Louis's sisters, Margaret and Antonie, were canonesses at Andain, two others, Catherine and Françoise, were canonesses also at Moustier on the Sambre. The latter, Adrian's youngest daughter, but the one who was most eager about her spiritual advancement, abandoned at an early age her canonry, to follow her brother to Liessies, where she chose to share with him a life of recollection and solitude.

When Louis's first studies were over, his career was the next thing which had to be thought of. From the position of his family he was naturally called to a court life; accordingly he was appointed to fill the duties of page and almoner to the archduke Charles, afterwards the much redoubted Charles V.

He arrived at the palace forewarned of the dangers he was to encounter by his mother's counsels and advice, and possessed already of the virtues of reserve and great self-distrust, and himself observing this rule which later on he drew out for his disciples: "To be discreet, circumspect, and prudent in all their actions, and carefully to avoid all singularity".[1]

Yet this extreme watchfulness which he kept

[1] *Speculum Spirituale*, Cap. V.

over himself took away nothing from the ardour and generosity natural to his years, and thus, whilst preserving his virtues in their first integrity, and the fervour of his piety, he knew how to gain the hearts of his companions by the chivalrous qualities and attractive gifts of his rich and many-sided nature.

The young arch-duke in particular evinced the deepest sentiments of friendship for him, and, as we shall see in the sequel of this narrative, in the midst of the pre-occupations of his immense charge, he never forgot the young page. Perhaps he had often occasion to admire the penetration of the youth who from the first discovered the deceptive frailty of the joys of this world, and who had found in the silence of the cloister that peace which he, the all-powerful monarch, when arrived at the summit of his greatness, was to come and seek in the same place, at the sad close of a life tormented by thirst for glory.

His parents, proud of this friendship, rejoiced at the position their son had won for himself, and at the continual testimonies which they received of his good conduct, when a providential accident took place, which struck at the root of their projects, and gave a fresh direction to the young courtier's ideas. When God has singled out a soul and destined it for the salvation of His people, what appears to be the

most insignificant event often becomes in His hands a powerful means to lead into the spiritual arena the athlete, who till that time had been destined for earthly combats.

One day as the entire court was taking part in a tourney, the unfortunate page received a wound in the head severe enough to oblige him to undergo a painful operation. The surgeon having asked him what form he was to give to the necessary incision, the young knight answered at once: "That of the Cross of Burgundy". [1]

This idea, which made some impression on the bystanders, struck also Louis himself, as if this answer, in which vanity had a share, revealed the secret designs of heaven over him.

One thing is certain, that from that moment a complete revolution was operated in his thoughts and feelings. His soul, far from becoming enfeebled by its contact with the frailties and dissipations of the court, "turned to the love of the Cross," [2] and perhaps already dimly discerned that admirable picture of the serene joys of the cloister which he afterwards gave to us:

"Blessed are they to whom Jesus Christ has

[1] The Cross of Burgundy was a St. Andrew's Cross, red in colour, which the knights of Burgundy wore as badge.

[2] The Bollandists.

addressed those words, 'Come out into the desert apart'. Blessed are they whom the Lord conducts through an immense and profound gulf to the haven of a secure and tranquil retreat, where they may taste the blessings of peace and of spiritual joy, where holy souls may give themselves up freely, without any care for the things that pass away, night and day, to the service of the King of the Universe. Henceforth they have no other care, than by their unswerving practice of obedience, by their sweet assiduity in prayer, by the attractive exercises of spiritual reading, by the baptism of devout tears, to please their Sovereign Lord. In an assemblage of the Monks of the strict Observance, all is piety and gentleness. *There* is to be found the sweet odour of many virtues, the shining splendour of the empurpled rose of charity, the resplendent whiteness of the lily of chastity, the violet of humility flourishing in the shade and breathing forth its sweet odour to the skies. Tumults and confusion are nowhere to be heard, neither loud cries, nor contentions; peace, and a delightful solitude reigns everywhere. Here the courageous athletes triumph every day in their spiritual combats with invincible foes. Angels, at this magnificent sight, fly in all haste to the assistance of the soldiers of Christ. And thus it comes to pass that

a fond mutual exchange of familiar relationships between the angels, dwellers in heaven, and men on earth, and between men, dwellers on earth, and the angels of heaven, is established. Blessed indeed are they, who, having triumphed over the tempests of this world, have taken refuge in the safe and tranquil haven of a religious life, in order to consecrate to God the remainder of their days, and to obtain as recompense the ineffable possession of a heavenly kingdom and eternal joys!"

Devoting himself thus completely to the cause of God, and imitating in the suddenness of his conversion the great St. Benedict, to whom he bore more than one feature of resemblance, Louis had henceforward nothing in common with the details of a courtier's life, which had been his up to that time, and after long hesitation he resolved to acquaint his parents with the irresistible vocation which called him to the service of God.

It was no passing emotion, however, which impelled the young page to enroll himself under the severe discipline of the cloister. His vocation was born of a passing emotion, but it was deeply founded on the knowledge of the vanity of human things, and the excellence of the works of God. This conviction came from on high by the revelation of faith alone, by contemplation of the merits of

the saints, and by the remembrance of the gigantic labours accomplished by them. At the dawn of his existence, at the decisive moment when the soul speaks out freely, when every generous soul aspires to greatness, and feels itself capable of any effort or any act of self-devotion, the young knight eagerly pressed forward into the saintly ranks, "towards the tents of the soldiers of Christ," as says St. John Chrysostom, and asked of the chiefs of the spiritual life the beautiful title of Knight of the Church,—which had been conferred by Charlemagne on the Abbots of his empire.

After all, he did but exchange his sword for the weapon of prayer, his almoner's purse for an inexhaustible treasure.[1]

"The beneficence of a Monk," he says in translating St. John Chrysostom's *Comparatio regis et monachi*, "is more than royal. The king, if a good one, can relieve the necessities of the body, but the monk by his prayers frees the soul from the tyranny of the devil. Man, struck with a mortal hurt, passes by the king as he would a lifeless corpse, and flies to the abode of the monks, as the peasant, alarmed by the sight of a wolf, seeks refuge with the huntsman armed

[1] He was almoner and page to the Archduke.

with a knife. What the spear is to the huntsman, prayer is to the monk." [1]

But however sure the road may be by which one advances, the enemy seeks to throw a mist over it, and Louis gives us an idea in his meditations of the attacks he had to submit to. "Behold on one side the devil, prince of darkness, who says to you, 'Listen to what I say, and follow me; be proud, and give up God in order to do your own will, love the world and the things that are in the world, and you will be tormented for ever in the flames of hell.' On the other side it is the kind and loving King of Glory, who says to you, 'Love God and the things of God, and you will be eternally happy with me in heaven'.

"When this happens to you, examine yourself carefully, to see which of the two you should give ear to, and follow. Your reason tells you in a loud voice that you should follow the Lord Jesus, your

[1] Translated from the following passage of Louis de Blois. "Igitur hic quidem aurum, ille spiritus gratiam largitur. Rursus hic ubi benignior vult esse, paupertatis malum tollit: ille animas sub dæmonum tyrannidem redactas pristinæ libertati suis precibus restituit. Et si quando contingat unum aliquem id genus calamitatibus fluctuari, is, eo modo, quo inanimata solent, regem pertransiens, ad monachorum domicilium ocius contendit, haud aliter quam si lupum fugeret et ad venatorem ferrum manu gestantem confugeret. Nam quod venatori ferrum, hoc plane monacho est deprecatio." Louvain, 1527.

Creator, your Redeemer, your Friend, and your Benefactor.

"Since it is thus, go unhesitatingly to Jesus Christ, and unite yourself to Him, and say from your heart, 'Lord Jesus! from this moment henceforward, I despise the devil, and I will have but one object in life, that is to follow Thee, my King, to imitate Thee, and to love Thee with the help of Thy grace'."[1]

It was not without emotion that the Lord of Jumigny and his wife received Louis's communication. But the grandeur of their faith, the elevation of their sentiments, the glorious memories of those devout servants of God, Louis's ancestors, triumphed quickly over their first hesitation. They fixed their choice at once upon a monastery. "Their wishes, and the close proximity of the Abbey of Liessies, of the Order of St. Benedict, indicated it as the spot, where the new combatant was to encounter his first passage of arms."[2]

Then the young page, at that time but fourteen years of age, was seen, amidst the tears of his brothers and attendants, to take leave for ever of Donstienne, the scene of the games of his youth, and of his dreams of the future. These dreams were to wither away at the feet of that King, who,

[1] Medit. VI. [2] The Bollandists.

for eighteen centuries, has attracted to himself an army inured to sacrifice, which carries with magnanimous serenity, wherever it goes, the glorious standard of the Faith.

His most ardent desire was to escape from honours, and to put in practice his favourite motto of "*latens vive*, live hidden," and to plunge himself like Elias into solitude, there to quench his thirst at the waters which flow from the torrent.

[1] "O God of love," would he have cried out with St. Gertrude, "Thou alone art my true and only love. Before Thee I stand from the morning early, and I will contemplate Thee, because Thou art sweetness and charm for all eternity. Thou art the thirst of my soul, in Thee is my spirit satiated, and yet the more I taste Thee, the greater is my hunger, and the more I drink of Thy fountain, the more athirst

[1] One cannot read this passage without recalling to mind the 17th chapter of the Manual attributed to St. Augustine, but whose exact authorship is not known, since it might also—in the opinion of some scholars—have been the work of either St. Anselm, or St. Hugh. "O love, full of sweetness, be my nourishment; let my soul be satisfied with the joy of loving Thee, and let my spirit no longer give birth to any but pious thoughts. God of charity, my food and my joy, make me to grow in Thee, so that I may be worthy of being nourished by Thee. Thou art the life by which I live, the hope on which I lean, and the glory which I ambition. Make Thyself master of my heart, reign over my spirit, direct my intelligence, increase my love, and lead me to those divine streams, there to quench the thirst which devours me."

I become. I have chosen and have preferred before all to be the last in Thy house, O my God, so as to aspire with stronger right to taste of Thy divine beauty. Throw one look upon me: teach me to know Thee. Thou hast been the first to love me—it is Thou who hast chosen me. Thou art He who didst hasten of Thine own accord to the creature who was athirst of Thee, and the brightness of eternal light shines upon Thy forehead. Show me Thy countenance, and let me contemplate Thy beauty. O Love, when my life approaches to its end, deign to shine upon me with the brightness of the morning, and when Thou shalt see me on the point of quitting this land of exiles, give me to drink from Thee of that life which shall have no end." [1]

But before crossing the threshold of the cloister at Liessies with Louis, it will not be without interest for our readers, to be told something about the place of his choice—its situation, its founders, and the glorious memories which gather round it.

[1] Exercises of St. Gertrude.

CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN OF LIESSIES.

IESSES or Liessies, in Latin Lætia, and first of all Lescia (in St. Bernard's works we again meet with this word), is, etymologically speaking, the same as Liesses, an old French word now fallen into disuse, and synonymous with joyfulness, which our forefathers in their simple language have applied to many sanctuaries where the soul came in search of joy, the rich to exchange alms for prayers, and the poor to stretch out a hand which was rarely disdained.

Nearly eleven hundred years ago, in the heroic times of Pepin le Bref, an illustrious count of Poitou, and favourite of the prince, wearied of the unceasing jealousies which this great friendship gave rise to, asked and obtained of Pepin, the concession of the territory of Liessies, which was situated not far from an ancient province of France of the name of Thiérache, on the confines of Hainault, and at about two leagues from Avesnes.

Wibert's intention was to retire thither as to a haven of rest, where, sheltered from the storms of a

court-life, he might conceal from the curious eyes of the world, amidst the consolations of piety and the joys of home-life, the rare and tender affection which united him to the gentle Ada, who herself had sprung from the oldest blood in Gaul.

Hubert, one evening losing his way in pursuit of a wild boar, arrived, followed by huntsmen and hounds, at the brink of a delightful stream called the Helpe. He saw by the light of the torches all the advantages offered by the site, the forests which crowned its summits, and the waters which fertilised it, and he conceived at once the project of erecting a monastery there. Returning to his wife, the Count acquainted her with his intentions, and asked the king to take part in the new foundation. With Pepin's approval he installed some austere and devoted Religious in the monastery, with the object of winning the people fr m their pagan traditions, and of teaching them the Gospel, and at the same time, the necessary arts of life.[1]

[1] The authors of the *Gallia Christiana* instance Gontard or Gontrade, St. Hiltrude's brother, as the first Abbot of Liessies. But Dr. Leglay and the Abbé Dehaisnes argue from the same authorities that this house was then served by Canons, and that it was only towards the end of the eleventh century that it was actually occupied by monks ; and by a singular coincidence the first Benedictine Abbot, who had, according to Dr. Leglay, taken possession of the monastery in 1096, was also called Gontard or Gonthier.

He chose as protector to the new edifice the St. Lambert bishop of Tongres or of Maestricht, who had shortly before "borne testimony to Christ," and had crowned a glorious apostleship with martyrdom.

Fortunate from its very commencement, the new foundation received, as monk first, and soon afterwards as abbot, Count Wibert's son, Gonthard, who adorned it by many virtues, and worthily inaugurated the series of abbots, who have made famous the name of Liessies.

Scarcely had Gonthard taken possession when he saw his sister[1] coming to seek refuge with him. "Beautiful in face," her chronicler tells us, "but rendered still more beautiful by the ardour of her faith, noble of race, but still nobler of conversation and presence, Hiltrude sought to equal her brother in virtue, and whilst he brought to his sister's mind the ardour of St. Jerome, she on her side was to him another Eustochium.[2]

[1] In the Library at Douay (No. 810), a MS. life still exists of St. Hiltrude, the translation of which in early French has never been edited. This translation is attributed to a monk of the Abbey of Waulsor, who lived in the eleventh century.

[2] Pulchra facie, sed pulchrior fide; nobilis genere, sed nobilior piâ conversatione: nam sicut ferrum ferro acuitur et caritas caritate fomentatur, ita virgo virginis fratris actus æmulabatur, dum ille huic alterum exhibebat Hieronymum, hæc illi alteram exhibebat Eustochium—*Chronicler of Hainault.*

Her hand had been asked in marriage by Hugh of Burgundy, but when she gave her formal refusal on the day fixed upon for the espousals, the news burst like a thunder-clap upon her parents. "If you ask me," she said, "my feelings upon this subject, I will let you know them without disguise. I have long loved Jesus Christ alone. To Him I have sworn my faith. If you will treat me as your child, and not separate me from the true Father and Spouse whom I have chosen, I will look upon you as my parents, and you shall ever find in me a devoted daughter. If not, I will know you no more, and I will break asunder the ties that bind me to you."

Her parents at first saw nothing in this refusal but a passing fancy, "but," adds Jacques of Guise, "they did not understand the strength of character of this woman which served to sustain her, *nesciunt in muliere virilem animum neque a Domino rem geri*"; and it was with dismay that they learned, the day following after this conference, that their daughter had disappeared, she having fled in the night accompanied by certain devoted followers.

Wibert, fearing the wrath of her betrothed husband, confided to him that Hiltrude had long formed the secret design of consecrating herself to the Lord, that the austerity of her life should have served to enlighten her parents, and that she had

retired into a convent, where Theodoric, Bishop of Cambray,[1] was to give her the veil. "One daughter is yet left to us," added the Count, "Bertha, and in testimony of our perfect good faith we offer her to you in marriage."

The chronicle makes no mention of Hugh of Burgundy's feelings on this substitution, but confines itself to saying that he accepted Bertha from her father's hands, married her, but had no children by her.

Reassured as to the consequences of her flight, Hiltrude went to ask her parents' blessing on her undertaking, and then returned to her refuge in the wilds—a cell in the neighbourhood of Liessies. For seventeen years she remained hidden there, leading upon earth the life of the blessed, and inflaming her soul with the desire of the good things of eternity, "until the day," her historian tells us, "when she joyfully quitted the world at the voice of her "spouse".[2] In the last days of her illness, her brother brought her Holy Communion; her father and mother were on each side of her, and in the transports of her joy she cried out, "how worthy of love, O my God, is the dwelling place of your elect, I

[1] The acts give him the name of Theodoric or Thierry, but his real name, according to the Abbé Destombes, was Alberic.

[2] The Bollandists.

aspire to it with all my heart, and my soul faints beneath the ardour of its desires". The moment so eagerly longed for arrived on the 27th of September, 750. She reposes on the spot which was witness of her prayer, and upon her tombstone is inscribed— " Hic jacet Hiltrudis Christi virginis corpus, quæ obiit IV. calendas Octobris".[1]

The Church has inscribed her name among the number of her Saints, keeping her feast on the 27th of September, and Liessies with justice claims her as its first and fervent patroness. We shall see later on, how, on the same spot, after an interval of eight centuries, two chosen souls were to revive these great and holy traditions, and to immolate to God in solitude, like their predecessors, the advantages, ever precious in the sight of the world, of a noble birth, and a great fortune.

Not content with founding Liessies and sacrificing to it the support of his declining years, Wibert wished also to secure its future.

Bertha, the wife of Hugh of Burgundy, having died without issue, Wibert and Ada made an edifying will, giving proof of their faith, by which they bequeathed all their worldly goods to Hiltrude,

[1] Jacques Guise was evidently acquainted with this ancient MS., (which I owe to the kindness of the Abbé Dehaisnes) as one follows it almost word for word in the Chronicles of Hainault.

on condition of the Monastery of Liessies being her sole heir.

Hiltrude having died before them, they directed that the will should be preserved in the tomb which had been erected to her not far from her cell, and, when they went to join their beloved child in the bosom of God, the Abbot Gonthard,[1] sole survivor of this heroic race, was able to carry out their last wishes, and deposit at the threshold of the Church, erected by their piety, the venerable remains of these champions of Christ, who, deeming themselves unworthy of reposing near the sanctuary, had asked the humble favour of being buried at the porch itself of the Temple.

Finally, Gonthard, after a holy life, was in his turn laid to rest in the middle of the choir by the hands of his monks.

These devout servants of God were, however, ere long to be disturbed in their last slumbers. A man of the name of Frangimare, "of noble descent (homo equestris), but of perverted nature," says J. de Guise, presented on his death-bed his war-horse to a priest of Liessies on the condition of being buried near Wibert. Scarcely had his sacrilegious wishes been complied with, when the voices of evil spirits were heard crying to Frangimare to mount his horse and

[1] The *Cameracum Christianum* calls him Gontrade.

fly, "because they did not dare to carry him off on account of the sanctity of the spot". On hearing this, the Bishop of Cambray forbade the celebration of the holy mysteries in the Church, and soon Hiltrude, rising from her place of burial, appeared to the guilty priest in his sleep. "Dominic," she said to him, "how have you presumed to place these unworthy remains near those of my parents, and thus hinder me from visiting them! Know, that, unless you remove them instantly, your offence shall not remain long unpunished." The priest obeyed at once, and the remains of Frangimare being scattered to the four winds, peace was restored in their midst. According to the history of Hainault, this was the occasion of Hiltrude's first supernatural intervention.

The great partition of the empire, after the reigns of Charlemagne and of Louis le Pieux, was fatal to Liessies. The Hungarians inundated France, plundered the castles and monasteries, and attempted to set fire to the church attached to Liessies, but, astonishing to relate, the fire, contrary to its nature, respected the spotless bodies reposing there.

"Sed mirum dictu, igni virium suarum oblito, nihil proficiunt; nolebat enim Dominus virginum suarum habitaculum ardere in igni, quarum corpora

habitacula utique sua non arserant in libidinis ardore." In vain the barbarians broke open the doors of the church, placing a barrel of pitch and saltpetre inside it, their efforts were fruitless, the flames respected the walls and the coffins.[1]

Nevertheless, in consequence of this invasion, the monks were dispersed, the inhabitants of the country around took possession of the Abbey lands and long retained them, and hence the second occasion of St. Hiltrude's intervention.

The property belonging to the monastery, lying nearest to the Church, was in the hands of a rich noble of the name of Adelard. His wife Ermentrude, a pious and charitable woman, had given her little girl, Advide, in charge of a young servant of good character, whose name was Roberge. God, who bestows His favours, says the chronicle, indiscriminately on all who have His fear before their eyes, condescended on account of her virtue, to manifest Himself to this servant.

One night, she thought she heard angels singing in the Church of Liessies, but the child's cries prevented her from distinguishing the sounds. She sought, whilst soothing the little girl with her caresses, to hearken to the sweet melody, when she was seized with a profound slumber. St. Hiltrude

[1] *Chronicle of Hainault.*

then approached her (Ermentrude's house joined on to the Church), and gently awoke her. "Child," said she, "have you heard nothing?" The servant answered, that sweet sounds of music had reached her ears. "I know," returned the saint, "that the child's voice prevented your hearing distinctly. In testimony, therefore, that you have heard the praises of God sung, and that His Church should be restored to its rightful occupants, an illness, which will not be mortal, shall seize the child, not to punish it as it is of too tender years to deserve chastisement, but because, on your declaring that you have heard the voice of angels, the child shall instantly recover its health, and thus testify to the truth of your words." At these words the Virgin disappeared.

The following day, the little Advide was covered all over with a species of leprosy, and her terrified mother was giving herself up to feelings of despair, when the servant told her of the vision she had beheld, and at once the leprosy disappeared.

Adelard did not accede at once to his wife's solicitations, but on Hiltrude's sending him a summons to restore the Church, by a man deputed by her for the purpose, he obeyed the order, and had it blessed by Bishop Gérard— "a prelate revered throughout his century as the most accomplished

personage who had flourished in his character of Churchman throughout Christendom."[1]

In spite of this act of reparation, part of the lands of the ancient monastery still remained in the hands of usurpers, and Wedric le Barbu, one of these, who withheld the very ground in which Hiltrude was buried, carried his audacity so far as to commit to the flames the will of Count Wibert, by which the foundation was secured. His son, Théoderic or Thierry, followed for some time the evil example set by his father, but God, taking compassion on him, sent him as consort the holy and noble Ada de Roucy. We here meet with so charming a tradition, that the temptation to give it is irresistible. Theodoric, whilst on one of his free-booting expeditions, had set fire to the Monasteries of St. Waltrude at Mons, and of St. Aldegonde of Maubeuge. The holy Patronesses of these Convents, angered at these crimes, had complained to the Blessed Virgin, who answered them: "I will not allow any injury to be inflicted on Theodoric at the present moment, for his wife renders me a service which inspires me with so much affection for her, that I cannot permit any misfortune to befall her husband". "What then is this service?" inquired the two saints. "Twenty times a-day," our Lady answered them,

[1] *History of the Netherlands.* By J. la Carpentier.

"she addresses me in the words of that angelical salutation which forms my joy upon earth, twenty times a-day she repeats, 'Hail Mary, full of grace'."[1]

Ada de Roucy made her husband understand the gravity of his offence, and in expiation he endowed Liessies with a considerable property in land, restored the Church, and had a relic of the Blessed Virgin's robe let into the altar under seal, by his kinsman, Bartholomew, Bishop of Laon.

In spite, however, of his repentance, St. Waltrude and St. Aldegonde did not pass over his offences. Ada's parents having caused her marriage with Thierry to be annulled on account of their relationship,[2] he was almost directly afterwards accidentally killed out hunting.

They buried him at Liessies, where, thanks to his munificence, the monks had once more resumed their conventual life, had given themselves up to the study of the divine sciences, and had submitted to so rigorous an Observance, that not only were laymen excluded from the choir, but they were also prevented from penetrating into the cloisters of the monastery.

We shall not undertake to give here a complete historical survey of the possessions of the Monastery

[1] *Annals of Hainault*, Vol. IX., from the Marquis of Fortia's edition.
[2] Feron Lœtiense.

of Liessies, which, under the friendly guardianship of the Lords of Avesnes, grew rapidly in extent. In time the Abbots assumed the position of powerful nobles, and were more than once chosen arbitrators in important questions. Margaret of Constantinople, Countess of Flanders and Hainault, in the 13th century, wishing to benefit the sons of her second husband, William de Dompierre, dared to stigmatise Baldwin and John d'Avesnes, sons of her first husband, Bouchard d'Avesnes, with the stain of illegitimacy. The cause was submitted to Pope Innocent IV., and Hugh, Abbot of Liessies, and Peter, Bishop of Châlons, being named arbitrators and judges, they declared the legitimacy of the D'Avesnes by a sentence of the year 1249. This sentence was confirmed by the Pope, and published, with threat of excommunication to all who did not yield to it, by Nicholas de Fontaine, Bishop of Cambray. A war soon broke out between the two families : finally St. Louis, King of France, put an end to these serious and often bloody disputes in 1256, by the treaty of Peronne, in which Flanders was awarded to the house of Dompierre, and Hainault to that of Avesnes.[1]

Thirty-three Abbots succeeded one another, with ever varying fortunes, but each one endeavouring

[1] A. Lebeau, *On the Ruins of the Abbey of Liessies.*

as much as possible to increase the patrimony of Liessies, and its precious treasure of relics. Did they all reach to the height of their vocation? By the list which we shall give later, it will be seen that the intervention of the Bishop of Cambray was sometimes rendered necessary to depose the unworthy dignitaries, whom the scorn of the monks has branded with a significant cognomen.[1]

We need scarcely deem it necessary to conceal their weak points, when we find the monks themselves revealing them to us with admirable frankness and simplicity in the chronicles written by them, following in this the precepts of the grandest monk of the past—St. Bernard himself.

"It is not," he says, "against monastic discipline, but in defence of it that I fight, when I reprove the vices of men who form part of it, and thus I do not fear to displease those who love order, rather I am quite sure of pleasing them in attacking what they have detested."[2]

And besides, what are a few isolated instances of monks, who were disgraced and denounced by their brethren, compared with the millions of austere and persevering religious, who, faithful to their vows, have merited during ten centuries the admiration of their contemporaries? May one not plead in their

[1] Paganus. See Appendix. [2] *Apologia ad Gullielmum.*

extenuation the continued change of habits and residence, so fatal to monastic regulations, caused by those times of trouble, war, and violence? Again, did not Hainault and Belgium witness, thanks to their ancient political franchise, how neighbouring countries gave Abbacies *in commendam* to courtiers, which should have been confided to true servants of Christ, and had not Charles V. to swear as Duke of Burgundy,[1] in his triumphal entry into Brabant, to a clause which stipulated: "That the Sovereign should not give away in any manner, or put *in commendam*, any Abbey, prelacy, or dignity of Brabant"? But if, as centuries elapsed, some abuses crept into the monastery of Liessies, it was its privilege at least to finish gloriously, and to give through the mouth of its Abbot and monks a calm and courageous denial to the demands of the revolution.[2]

[1] See Appendix, in the list of the Abbots of Liessies, article, Jean Baccart, thirtieth Abbot of Liessies, the courageous answers made by him to the Duke of Burgundy, who insisted upon imposing an Abbot upon the community, contrary to the Monks' vows and the approbation of ecclesiastical authorities. Note No. II.

[2] Dom Mark Verdier, Abbot of the said Abbey, born on the 20th of April, 1735, and professed the 8th of September, 1755, declares: "That he wishes to observe in the said house, as far as in him lies, the rule he had with the authority of the Church, and the protection of Government embraced. In testimony of which he signs himself." —*Official Report of the Commissioners of the district of Avesnes.*

After reading the touching history of the first ages of monastic life, the mind takes pleasure in contemplating for a moment this marvellous concert of so many pious, faithful, and enthusiastic voices, issuing forth simultaneously, in celebration of their happiness, from the depths of forest-glades and from the caves among the rocks, and one finds oneself repeating with Montalembert—"The Church has known days more solemn and more resplendent, days fitter to excite the admiration of wise men, the fervour of pious souls, and the unalterable confidence of her children. But I know not if she has ever breathed a purer or a more exquisite charm, than she did in this, the spring-time of the monastic life." [1]

[1] *Monks of the West.*—Montalembert.

CHAPTER III.

LOUIS DE BLOIS' ARRIVAL AT LIESSIES—HIS NOVICESHIP—LOUVAIN.

OM Giles Gippus, the abbot who received Louis de Blois as novice, and at that time governed Liessies, was a venerable old man, as well as a religious of exemplary conduct, who wept in silence over the relaxation of his community. Scarcely had he looked at Louis's fine and placid countenance, and had questioned him about his vocation, than he recognised in the child the man who was to regenerate the Benedictine Monasteries, and restore their enfeebled and refractory sons to their ancient rule. Accordingly, he recommended the young page to the special care of John Meurisse, the master of novices, whose generous nature at once understood that of Louis. Under his energetic direction, and assisted by the grace of God, who was preparing him by gentle degrees for a special mission, Louis used all possible care to acquire the perfection necessary to his sublime calling. His ardent zeal, modified by the gracious manner which was natural to him,

gave him at once the ascendency not only over the young men of his age, but even over the old monks, and his own spiritual guide, who became later on one of his most ardent admirers, and, when he was made Abbot, prior under him. "We cannot pass over in silence," say the Bollandists, alluding to Meurisse, "that he submitted with great good-will to his former disciple; when Louis de Blois was raised to the dignity of Abbot, he filled the post of procurator, then that of prior, and he obeyed his superior in all things till his death in 1559. He was, therefore, the disciple in spiritual direction of his pupil, during the space of twenty-six years, as had happened formerly in the case of the venerable St. Romuald, and our holy father St. Benedict."[1]

The young novice gave himself up at once to the attractions of this peaceful life, which contrasted so vividly with the noise and agitation of the court; he did not remain "in that lowly region, where," as Bossuet says in his panegyric on St. Benedict, "the streams flow, the flowers bloom in the morning, and by evening are no more, where all is constant change, nor in that other region which is no less dangerous to the soul, where everything feeds the spirit of self-love. He had chosen from the very outset the highest path—the path of union with

[1] *Acta SS.*, Jan. Vol. I.

God."[1] "He formed no thought or will of his own on any subject," says his historian, "abandoning himself to the tender care of Providence, his only desire being to observe holy obedience with eagerness and joy."[2]

This holy rule, which sank so deeply into his heart, has been thus royally interpreted by one of our great bishops. "If a man, in separating himself from his family, and going forth in search of solitude, gives himself over to a family of brothers, in whose company he devotes himself to the service of God, to mortification and labour, be it of mind or of body, under the guidance of an abbot, who is at the same time a master and a father to him, he will become on these conditions, in which the religious life is comprised, the monk spoken of by St. Benedict, and he will belong to that valiant race to whom alone those words were addressed: *Ad cœnobitarum fortissimum genus.* To sanctify himself personally in the exercise of this perfect life, and then to be applied to this or that ministry without any preconceived will or opinion of his own, to become qualified in all good and useful work, to be ready for the day when obedience shall call him forth to the service of souls and of the Church, that

[1] *Panegyric upon St. Benedict*—Bossuet.
[2] The Bollandists.

is the ideal Benedictine in all the simplicity, and yet to the full extent and breadth, of his vocation."[1]

Through what mysterious cause was it, therefore, that this youth of fifteen had from the very beginning arrived at a stage of perfection and detachment, which others, even the old religious, were oftentimes so long in attaining to? No doubt, God was desirous of stamping his chosen soul with the seal of His grace and favour, so that the virtue of their future reformer might shine forth in the eyes of his degenerate brethren. Already entirely absorbed in the care of his soul, he had reached that state which is so well described in the "Rules for a Spiritual Life".

"Happy is the man who, having interiorly renounced all things, learns how to give up and abandon even himself; who by perfect self-abnegation has attained to perfect love! What peace does not this man possess! No words can give an idea of what it is, so great is it. Among those who have arrived at this perfection, there are some, who, scarcely able to endure the impetuosity of this celestial visitation, are forced almost as it were to fly, crying, 'Lord moderate a little the torrent of Thy grace'. And God, indeed, whilst visiting these privileged souls with such unspeakable goodness,

[1] Mgr. Pie—*Funeral Oration of Dom Guéranger.*

operates also commonly in them a most miraculous transformation, so that these thrice blessed souls can indeed join with the Psalmist in singing, 'For me I will sleep and take my rest'. Oh, most desirable peace, which surpasses all thought and understanding! Delightful peace, in which the soul interiorly enraptured forgets all outer things, and reposes in its Saviour. Sweet peace! which transports the mind far above itself, and absorbs it utterly in God in a plenitude of ineffable glory! Happy the soul, who is worthy of having its fervour thus kept alive in the bosom of her spouse, and of thus sleeping in the arms of the Well-Beloved! What tongue can express the transports of her joy, when, in this fulness of spiritual delight, she loses all thought of self, when she is entirely absorbed in unspeakable consolation, and is intoxicated in a happiness which reveals to her the blessed security of the saints?"[1]

We, who live in the midst of the sordid cupidities of a worldly life, can but little understand that interior peace which it was the monastic historian's first care to impress upon us, in the history of a monk whose life he was studying—a peace which contributes so greatly to set off the dignity of man.

The first part of our century appeared to believe,

[1] *Canon vitæ Spiritualis.* Cap I.—Blosius.

that religious orders were no longer to be counted in the history of living things," and Montalembert himself, when arrived at the years of manhood, had only seen the habit of a monk on the stage of a theatre! "Have we not all of us," he says in his Introduction to the "Monks of the West," "left College knowing the number of Jupiter's mistresses by heart, but ignorant of the very names of the founders of those religious orders who have civilised Europe, and likewise so often saved the Church! Dare I own when I first saw the habit of a monk? It was on the boards of a theatre."[1] The attraction to solitude, the desire of finding oneself alone with God, face to face with the problem of the life to come, far from all that lowers and enervates the soul, is, nevertheless, so implanted in the nature of man, that even those whose passions have stopped the current of their being towards Him, who alone gives consolation, have acknowledged, with the cry of their suffering, that thirst for God which gave rise to Monasticism.

Cloîtres silencieux, voûtes des monastères,
C'est vous, sombres caveaux, vous qui savez aimer!
Ce sont vos froides nefs, vos pavés et vos pierres
Que jamais lèvre en feu n'a baisés sans pâmer.
. . . . . .
Trempez-leur donc le front dans les eaux baptismales.—

[1] Introduction to the *Monks of the West*, p. 14.

Dites-leur donc un peu ce qu'avec leurs genoux
Il leur faudrait user de pierres sépulchrales
Avant de soupçonner qu'on aime comme vous ?
Oui c'est un vaste amour qu'au fond de vos calices
Vous buviez à pleins cœurs, moines mystérieux !
La tête du Sauveur errait sur vos cilices
Lorsque le doux sommeil avait fermé vos yeux,
Et quand l'orgue chantait aux rayons de l'aurore
Dans vos vitraux dorés vous la cherchiez encore,
Vous aimiez ardemment ! oh ! vous étiez heureux ![1]

And yet, is it possible that these austere, but benevolent forms, which Lesueur has immortalized, live no longer, excepting in his pictures? Go and look into the cloisters of a Trappist Monastery, at a time when the religious are not engaged in manual labour. Look at them slowly pacing their cloisters, and tell me if these men, our contemporaries, and condemned like us to degenerate and fallen days, have not resumed, with their old habit, the courage and energy of their predecessors, the civilizers of the Gauls.

"I approve," says Yves de Chartres, as quoted by Montalembert, "of these men's lives, to whom the

[1] *Rolla*—Alfred de Musset. Read also this other acknowledgment by a man, whose name is a sufficient comment upon it. "There is no doubt but that, in losing the institutions of monastic life, the human mind has lost a grand school of originality. Now all that contributes to maintain a tradition of moral nobility in humanity is worthy of respect, and in one sense of regret, even when this result has been bought at the price of many prejudices and abuses." Ernest Renan. —*Journal des Débats*, 1855.

town is no better than a prison, who find solitude a paradise, and who live there on the work of their hands, who drink deeply, and from the heart, of the fountain of life, and who forget what is behind, in order to press onwards to what is before. But unless man possesses in himself solitude of mind, peace of conscience, and elevation of soul, he will not find happiness even in the most impenetrable forests, or highest mountains; and without these there is no solitude which does not give birth to sloth, curiosity, vain-glory, and all the storms of the most perilous temptations."

Louis being deficient in science, that ornament of piety and powerful auxiliary of virtue, it was necessary for him to leave, at Dom Gippus's command, the noviceship, in order to study belles-lettres at the University of Louvain. "This academy, which was at once," say the Bollandists, "the mother of the belles-lettres and the New Athens of divine and human science, possessed at this time many brilliant doctors and famous theologians, among others John Driedon,[1] and Ruard Tapper, a Dutchman by birth, who later on was intrusted by Philip II. with various diplomatic missions.

[1] Driedon or Dridoens (John) was born at Tournehout in Brabant, was Doctor and Professor at Louvain, Canon of St. Peter and parish priest of St. James in the same town, and died in 1535. He has left several highly esteemed works upon free-will.

One of these professors, remarking Louis's aptitude for languages, directed his attention especially to this study. This master, who was no other than the famous Nicholas Clenard, a very distinguished philologist, inspired his pupils with a love of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; from which languages the latter drew later on, according to the custom of the sixteenth century, the titles of several of his works.[1] He gave at the outset a proof of his knowledge, in translating "The King and the Monk Compared" of St. John Chrysostom from Greek into Latin.

On his arrival at Louvain, Louis de Blois had sought out among the students, who attended the University, young men of serious tastes, who were studious, and enemies of dissipation. In 1520, as in the present day, young men of such dispositions were rare: he had, nevertheless, the happiness of meeting, in John de Lannoy-Molembaix, a devoted friend and one worthy of him. This young student, who was born of an ancient house which has given Naples a Viceroy, was later on to follow a brilliant career, to become Counsellor of Charles V., and to wear, in consideration of his services, the badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

Did he preserve through life that attachment to Louis which he manifested towards him at Louvain,

[1] The *Psychagogia*. The *Cimeliarchion*.

and of which the dedication which precedes the translation of the work of St. John Chrysostom remains as proof? Did he, once at Court, forget the young monk, of whose character he had felt the ascendency? Or did he preserve for the Abbot of Liessies what a great writer, whose name comes naturally to my pen, calls—"That friendship, born amidst the outpouring of the soul and the delightful dreams of youth, which survives the reverses, treason, inconstancies, and cowardlinesses, which disfigure and darken the riper years of man, and which continually bridges over to us the abyss which separates the present from the past?"[1]

Of this we know nothing. We give, however, the dedication, and one takes pleasure in thinking that the young man, whose soul was so dear to the Benedictine, ever reciprocated an affection which was akin, in its wisdom and its depth, to the counsels of old age.

"To John de Molembaix, illustrious by birth and conduct. If, my dear Molembaix, you had counted upon some work of mine as proof of my affection, you might well have come to doubt a friendship which has been so long idle. But if you judge more from the sentiments of the heart, than from the letters you have received from me, be persuaded,

[1] *Monks of the West.*—Montalembert.

I beg of you, that no one is more attached to you than Louis de Blois. As proof of this, I dedicate to you this translation of a little book of St. John Chrysostom, in which that great writer compares the King to the Monk. I have never yet seen a Latin translation of it. I may say that this work is mine, as certainly it has cost me as much pains to translate, as it did the author to compose it. I send it to you, my dear Molembaix, with the earnest wish that you will never neglect your soul, and begging of you often to reflect on the short duration of this life, and on the deceitful pleasures of the age. It is not that I have any fears for you, whose piety is founded on so sure a basis, but that it is the property of true affection, to tremble even when no dangers threaten the objects of it, and to urge on still more those who tread the narrow path."[1]

Dom Gippus, who was now approaching extreme old age, felt that the time had come when his shoulders were too weak to bear the burthen of the administrations of the affairs of his monastery. After reflecting and consulting with his brethren, he resolved to take a coadjutor, and to propose for that office Louis de Blois. This choice might well appear remarkable, as the young Monk had only

[1] Louvain, May 1st, 1527.

been three years in the monastery, besides the three years of his noviceship; he was the youngest there, and almost the last to come, and, finally, his higher studies still detained him at Louvain. Notwithstanding all this, his name was hailed with acclamation, as the most worthy, by the monks who surrounded the Abbot at the council convoked by him.

At this epoch, the customs of ancient times were still in force, which prescribed that the wisest monk, the most holy, and one of ancient lineage should be chosen in preference to rule over a monastery.

Wise he was already, witness his translation of St. John Chrysostom, and the evidence of his masters; holy, his virtues shone forth in the sight of all men; and as to birth, was not the house of D'Avesnes, one of the greatest benefactors of Liessies, and derived from that of Châtillon?

We must not think that it was pride which urged the monks to put at their head the one among them whose birth made him illustrious in the sight of the world; if birth was a precious distinction in their eyes, it was because it gave their Abbots that standing which enabled them to hold their own among the nobles whose possessions surrounded the monastery, and who required but little excuse to have recourse to violence towards them.

Knowing the true humility of his disciple and

foreseeing his distress, Dom Meurisse, the master of novices, wrote to him to encourage him not to evade the duty which was going to be imposed upon him. One can easily picture to oneself the young man's agony, when, having renounced the world in order to live a life of submission and concealment, he was thus called, without a moment's warning, to the spiritual and temporal government of an important Abbey. He represents to himself the Abbot holding the place of Christ, taking the Pastor's office over his children, and owing to them the example of those perfections which he commands them to practice.

"Intrusted with the formidable mission of governing souls, he will owe to God the strictest possible account of it; and the Rule, almost at every page, enjoins him never to lose sight of this terrible responsibility. He must not only govern them, but he must also correct them, he must not only lead them, but also support them, and be the servant of those whom he commands, so that he obeys all, whilst all obey him."[1]

These reflections overwhelm him, but he knows that the monk's first duty is to obey, and "that the power of obedience should equal the occasion of the command".[2] As St. Maurus goes without a

[1] Montalembert. [2] Bossuet—*Panegyric upon St. Benedict.*

moment's hesitation, at St. Benedict's word, to take St. Placid out of the lake into which he had fallen, and walks upon the waters with as much composure as he would have done on dry land, so he also will accept without a murmur the post which is assigned to him, and he writes thus to his dear Dom Meurisse.

"Louis, humble servant of Jesus Christ, to his very dear brother, Dom John Meurisse, wishing him all the joys of heaven. You have done well, true friend of God, to console your son to your utmost in his anguish of mind. May God reward you, as I cannot do it worthily. I placed, my very dear brother, my will in the hands of the Abbot at the time of my profession, and I have neither the wish nor the power to oppose myself to what he exacts of me. I am the unprofitable servant of Jesus Christ, prepared to stoop without murmuring to the burthen which, if I can, I shall carry, or to sink under, if my strength fails me. Far better would it be to sink beneath the burthen through obedience, than to incur the wrath of God by refusing it. I pray that this charge may be of no greater trial to me than to bring me fatigues, anguish, and sorrows; so far from seeking to avoid them, I shall invoke them as my fondest wish, they shall be to me the very path to heaven.

"What advantage will it be to me, having left the world, if I must so soon return to it? Well may I cry with David, 'The tribulations of my heart have become multiplied'.[1] What doubles my grief, is that the way of life, led by our monks (if I am to judge from what I hear said, and from what I was able to see myself), is very far removed from the rule of our Father, St. Benedict. Alas, what am I, that I should undertake to correct them? God is my witness, that I have no other object in my tears, my prayers, than to obtain for our Congregation the grace of returning to the practice of a holy and salutary penance. It is your duty, my very dear brother, on your side, to give yourself up to fervent prayer, that God may not, irritated by such a multitude of offences, turn away His face from our House. These are my fears; I do not refuse the ministry to which I am called, but the dangers, with which it is so beset, call forth my strongest apprehensions. Nevertheless, I place my hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, who does not despise the contrite and humble heart; He will help me in all things, above all, if you will be pleased to pray for me. Honour and glory be to Him for all eternity. I recommend myself to your prayers. Louvain, 31st July, 1527. Your very humble brother, Louis de Blois."[2]

[1] Ps. xxiv. 17. [2] The Lille Archives.

Louis de Blois would not refuse the task imposed upon him, which his humility and his prudence yet made him dread. "To have but one sole and only will in God," he says, "is the very summit of virtue, it is perfection itself. He who is ready to deny himself, and to renounce his own will, in order to abandon himself to the will of God and to resign himself freely to it, that one may be sure that the path he treads is the right one."

After having long prayed to God, he acknowledged that the good of the monastery required of him that he should stoop his neck to the yoke, and that he should accept, for God and through obedience, the honours he would very willingly have escaped.

It was in these dispositions that the new coadjutor entered into his fresh duties at Liessies, of which he was to be the reformer and the ornament, and which owes to this holy Abbot the purity and brilliancy of the light which animated it, at that critical time, when so many monastic institutions were to crumble away before the Reformation, and thus make room for the new Order,[1] of which Louis de Blois was the champion in Belgium, and whose glorious destinies he had foreseen from the very beginning.

[1] That of the Jesuits.

CHAPTER IV.

POPE PAUL III. ISSUES A BULL, APPROVING HIS NOMINATION—DEATH OF THE ABBOT GIPPUS—LOUIS TAKES POSSESSION—HIS ORDINATION—HIS ABBATIAL BENEDICTION—COMMENCEMENT OF HIS REFORM.

OUIS'S appointment having been hailed with acclamation by the entire community, he was legitimately confirmed in his functions the following year, 1528, by a bull of Pope Paul III., under the date of November the 28th. He was then twenty-two years of age, and had only been seven years professed. As his literary and theological studies were not entirely concluded, he prolonged his stay, notwithstanding his new dignities, at Louvain.

Two years afterwards, at the age of seventy, Gippus, the wise and holy old man, was called to the next world. His death brought the young Coadjutor back to Liessies to render due honour to his father and friend, and to praise his prudent administration.

Later on, Louis, to perpetuate the memory of Gippus, and to recall his tender devotion to Our Lady, had him painted on his knees, in the position

of a suppliant, before her whom he had so often invoked. Thus it is that these monks, who had loved each other in the seclusion of a laborious and peaceful life, would not voluntarily break asunder the ties which bound them together, but sought rather to re-unite, by prayer and a thousand ingenious devices, that link which in the world is oftentimes so sadly broken, and which should ever unite our souls to the souls of the departed. "And," add the Bollandists, "this pious care to preserve the memory of Gippus was only just, for those who in the course of ages will have been indebted for their spiritual advancement to the works, the advice, and the example of Louis de Blois, will owe to this holy prelate likewise a tender remembrance, and an everlasting gratitude."[1]

On the 12th of July, Louis de Blois took possession of his new Office, and in the month of November the monastery kept three days of rejoicing, the memory of which still lived at Liessies a hundred years later, when the pious hand of a Benedictine recorded the history of their venerable Abbot.

On the 11th of November, the young Abbot received the august Sacrament of Holy Orders. With what fervour he must have heard pronounced over

[1] "There is nothing like a Religious House for keeping by-gone memories alive."—*Thoughts*, by Madame Swetchine.

him those solemn words, and the oath which, coming from the lips of God Himself, was repeated by His Prophet—"Tu es sacerdos in æternum!" Thou art a priest for ever! Better than another, he was able to understand its whole bearing, and to appreciate to its full extent the sacrifice which God claims from him who would undertake the office of the Priesthood. "Yes," says Lacordaire, in a luminous interpretation of the words of David, "the Priesthood is an immolation of man united to that of God, and he is called to it, who feels in his heart, the price and beauty of souls. Whoever recognises here below, beneath the melancholy covering which oppresses and blinds us, the immortal image and likeness of God, whoever discerns in it, notwithstanding sin, ruin, and desolation, an object of love so singular that he would die for it, that one bears a great treasure in a frail vessel. He is of the blood that is shed for the salvation of souls; he hears somewhere, high above all, those words, sweet, and penetrating: 'Tu es sacerdos in æternum!' No age is excluded from this summons of the valiant; proceeding from eternity, eternity supplies what is wanting in the child to comprehend it, in the old man to respond to it; but if no age is excluded from it, there is an age which is preferred for it. In youth, more than at any other time, man is impressionable to the

voice of God; all things meet there as on a frontier, passions border upon virtues, and, as in the case of St. Augustine, the very depth of self-indulgence gives birth to the extremity of self-sacrifice. Sometimes it happens that youth expands and grows up in its first innocence, and to a spotless body unites a faith which has known neither shadow nor trial. The eye of God alone knows and decides between the youth who has never fallen, and he who has recovered his honour and his love, in the experience of evil."[1]

Without that eloquence which carries one away with it, but with the gentle persuasiveness peculiar to him, Louis de Blois defines the duties of a priest: "Good priests," he says in his "Spiritual Institutions," "are holy vessels replenished with celestial gifts. They carry the Lord Jesus profoundly engraved in their hearts. His passion, His death, His fidelity, His love is ever present to their recollection. They are the intermediaries between the sinner and God. They are beneficent, humane, and gentle to all who seek their help. They are chaste, sober, and simple in their tastes. They offer Jesus crucified to His celestial Father for the living and the dead. They are at the feet of God, interceding fervently for His holy Church. They seek

[1] *Panegyric upon the Blessed Fourier.* By Lacordaire.

not the friendship, and the respect of men, so as to obtain riches and honours, but they desire the glory of God, and the salvation of His people."

The glory of God, and the salvation of His people! Beautiful motto, which should have been Louis's during the whole period of his life as priest. On the 12th, he offered to God the first fruits of his priesthood; and then on the 13th, he received the Abbatial blessing in the midst of a numerous assemblage of secular and regular prelates; the crosier, the symbol of his new dignity, was placed in his hand, and his name was inscribed on the roll of the Abbots of Liessies. "He was the thirty-fourth Abbot; not counting from the first foundation of the monastery, but from the time when the religious returned to their monastery after the Norman invasion."[1]

His family assisted him on this memorable occasion, and one might have seen by the side of the former page of the Archduke, now a soldier of Christ, his brother, Adrian de Blois, who was to render his name formidable throughout Flanders, and to defend at the same time the interests of the State, and of the Benedictine Monasteries.

I had hoped to find traces here once more of his holy mother, Catherine de Brabançon, but there is

[1] The Bollandists.

no mention made of that enlightened woman, who would doubtless have thanked heaven for the part chosen by her son, and watered those hands, reserved for the altar, with her tears.

When the name of Louis de Blois first began to be known, monasticism was passing through a great crisis in Europe; for ten centuries the genius of reformers sought with unwearied effort to maintain the ancient Religious Orders in their primitive Observance. Notwithstanding the wars, the Benedictine Monasteries in Belgium had kept out of many scandals and abuses, from which, unfortunately, other monasteries had not succeeded in preserving themselves. But this country was the exception to the rule. Elsewhere, privileges and the power of placing Abbeys "in commendam" descended as so many plagues upon communities, suffocating little by little all religious life out of them. Satire, ever pitiless, chose monastic degeneracy for its ordinary theme, exaggerating it, and introducing it, amidst loose and frivolous verses, to a populace, greedy of that style of composition. Governments, seeing only a means of enriching themselves in the fall of these Institutions—formidable as long as they kept to the austere statutes of their primitive rule, lost no time in placing at the head of communities courtiers, whose scandalous expenses were taxed upon the secular

patrimony bestowed by faith and charity. Belgium again refused to submit to the custom of giving Abbeys "in commendam," and Louis de Blois' predecessor had but the relaxation of discipline and want of energy of his religious to lament over.[1] Foreseeing the crisis, he wished to arm his brethren and renew their strength, by bringing them back to those fountains of living water contained in their ancient constitutions. The new Abbot entered fully into these ideas. He knew well that, in taking in hand the government of the monastery, he had not been invited to pleasure and repose, but to a life of labour and of cares. Hence his first resolution was to omit nothing which could contribute to the rigorous and exact accomplishment of his new duties, and to the spiritual advancement of those committed to his charge. With his eyes fixed upon the rule of St. Benedict, he repeated incessantly these solemn words—"Let the Abbot understand, that to the Shepherd will the fault be ascribed, if,

[1] The custom of sending monks to the priories attached to Abbeys, and thus leaving them to themselves, had injured little by little the exact observance of the rule, and one may notice in the interesting exchange of letters between Louis de Blois and Philip de Croy, Duke of Arschot, that Abbots, who were solicitous of maintaining strict monastic tradition in their communities, were much opposed to this dispersion of the religious in the various foundations, and preferred placing there one or more Secular Priests.

when the Father of the family comes, any of his sheep are found missing. Then only shall he be justified, if he has given all his care to an indocile and refractory flock, if all his solicitude has been employed in remedying the lukewarmness of their actions, so that fully vindicated in the judgment of God, that Shepherd may say with the prophet—'I have declared thy truth and thy salvation, and they have made no account of it, and have despised me.' Then shall those sheep, who have resisted his cares, have for punishment the death which shall overtake them."[1] It was difficult for him, in the delicate position in which he found himself placed, to decide as to which reform should precede the others. He was acquainted with the wise maxim, that one must trust to time for a great deal, and that it is of the utmost importance that the first blows should be struck in the right place. In fine, that he should not use too much severity at first, so as to alienate those monks by an immoderate zeal, whose habits he wished to reform. God, however, had given him from his earliest years that perfect tact which supplements experience, and of this one is able to judge from a rule which he drew out for himself when he had occasion to reprimand any one. "When you are obliged to reprimand any one, make use first

[1] *Rule of St. Benedict.*—From Dom Guéranger's translation.

of all of gentle observations and good advice in preference to censures, or else contrive to have an interview alone with this person, during which you will let fall here and there reflections proper to make your neighbour enter into himself. But, when once it is necessary to use severity, let it be done without rancour. Let it be the love of God and the salvation of souls which urge you to severity, never temper, or personal motives. Let the harshness of your language be tempered by charity. *Let sin and not man be the object of your attack;* man is a good work, made by God—sin is an evil thing, of which man is the author."[1] His power to bring so difficult an enterprise to a happy conclusion was limited. His youth, his recent elevation to his new dignities, were all so many difficulties in his way to the reclamation of religious, who could claim long habit and a right of prescription, as it were, in their favour. He persevered none the less in his resolution, persuaded that God would supply him with means to carry out the end he had in view. He wished to preach by his example, and to give to his community the pattern of a pure and genuinely monastic life, believing with reason that the authority of an Abbot, with regard to his inferiors, depends less upon the number of his years than upon his rigorous attention to discipline.

[1] *Canon vitæ spiritualis.*—Blosius.

This zealous pastor of souls, however, notwithstanding his example and his exhortations, could not bring round his religious from the very beginning to the reforms which he was desirous of effecting, "For," his historians add, "if it is true that nature ever inclines to take her ease, it is also true that it is difficult to prevail upon souls used to self-indulgence to take the opposite path. Many religious saw with uneasiness mitigations retrenched which for many years had been tolerated, and came to Louis, to beg of him to let them go on as they had done before."

The Abbot, to whose gentle character these radical measures were repugnant, yet whose firmness never gave way, replied to them—"If you are religious, you should tend with all your powers towards perfection, you should lead a pure, humble, eminently holy life. If, in the state of life which you have chosen, you preserve a heart attached to the world, if you live carelessly and indifferently, and if death surprises you in these dispositions, you will be infallibly precipitated into hell, or at least will have to endure long torment in purgatory. You will tell me, perhaps, 'this perfection is beyond me, that is why I do not attach myself to it, and why I do not struggle to reach it, for fear of having to labour in vain'; but my answer to you is,

that you are obliged by your vocation to make every effort to arrive at perfection. You may persuade yourselves what you please, you may invent as many excuses and pretexts as you choose, still you are obliged to tend towards perfection. That is the truth. If you have ignored it till this day, now you can ignore it no longer. You have bound yourselves, you have put yourselves under obligations; you remain bound, and under obligations."[1]

Louis was well aware that he could not obtain perfect results at first; "Thus," say the Bollandists, "he had recourse to the divine goodness, and opened his heart to God, imploring him to melt the dispositions of those who would not listen to his just remonstrances."

To obtain this grace more easily he shed many secret tears in the presence of God. Through them he hoped to obtain consolation and help. With St. Bernard, he called them weapons against the rebellious disposition of his people. It is these tears, they add, which have made "The Mirror of Monks".[2]

[1] Blosius.

[2] This, the most remarkable treatise of all those which proceeded from his pen, is known under the name of *Speculum Monachorum*, and also under that of Dacryanus, from the Greek Δακρύω, which signifies weeping.

Eight years succeeded one another, during which Louis, absorbed in prayer, gave himself up with ardour to the re-establishment of discipline, without any fruit but the merit of his efforts and his good-will. No one could describe the sufferings of this energetic servant of God in seeing his advice neglected, and he was able to write with as much truth as felicitousness of expression: "Accept lovingly all the trials which are sent you, as if they were the most precious gifts God could confer upon you. Do not think it possible that anything could happen to you outside the economy of divine Providence, because unless our Lord permitted it, you would never have to suffer. Never entertain any feelings of contempt against people who clash with you ; look upon them as instruments made use of by God for the accomplishment of His designs, love them, and give thanks to Providence. The present life is the path which leads us to our country, and thus we are often exposed to tribulations here below, in order that we may not prefer the path to our true country. God scatters obstacles on the road of His elect for fear that, abandoning themselves to repose in this life on a path strewn with flowers, they should wish to prolong their journey instead of hastening on, for fear also that the pleasures of the journey should make them lose the desire for their own country."[1]

[1] *Psychagogia*, Book IV.

Finally his patience triumphed, some souls were moved by the mercy of God, Who had beheld the tears and prayers of His servant, to a more strict fulfilment of the rule of St. Benedict; hope returned once more to his heart, when a trial, greater even for Hainault than for Liessies, brought to light the young Abbot's courage and energy.

CHAPTER V.

MARY OF AUSTRIA, REGENT OF BELGIUM—DEATH OF THE DAUPHIN, SON OF FRANCIS I.—INVASION OF FLANDERS, AND CAPTURE OF HESDIN, 1537—LOUIS DE BLOIS RETIRES TO ATH WITH THREE RELIGIOUS—HE COMMENCES HIS REFORM THERE—CHARLES V. GIVES HIM ORDERS TO RETURN TO LIESSIES—HE OBEYS ON CONDITION ONLY OF BEING ALLOWED TO INTRODUCE THERE A MITIGATED REFORM—HIS RETURN.

T the moment when this history opens, Mary of Austria, Queen of Hungary, governed Belgium, as regent, in the name of her brother, Charles V., who himself was continually called from one point to another of the vast theatre occupied by his restless ambition. Mary of Austria merits undoubtedly a place in the first rank among the women of this interesting epoch. With a mind of great penetration, ever resolute and indefatigable, and with equal abilities for administration and for war, she displayed a masculine courage, and great presence of mind in times of danger, and possessed the profundity of views and force of character of Charles V., whose favourite sister she was. She watched over the interests of Belgium, during nearly a quarter of a

century, amidst the most astounding variations of her brother's fortunes, with an enlightened solicitude, and a love of truth and of duty which won her the gratitude and affection of the people. The care she exercised to keep Flanders free from the inroads of Protestantism, the prudent and humane measures which she employed to bring back those of her servants who had allowed themselves to be misled, had especially attached to her person Louis de Blois—who was already well known to her. Besides those services rendered to the House of Austria by this branch of the House of Blois since its establishment in Hainault, William de Blois, Louis's eldest brother, was attached as Chamberlain to the Queen, and his two brothers, Adrian and Richard, one of whom governed Avesnes and the other Beaumont, had frequent communication with the court.

Louis was rejoiced at the excellent dispositions of the Regent, upon whom he counted to aid him in the reform of his monastery, when an unforeseen demonstration on the part of France came to thwart all his plans.

In the month of November of 1526, the French nobility had inflicted a severe check on the Spanish arms at Peronne, and Francis I. had made a joyful entry into Paris, when the sudden death of the

Dauphin, a Prince of great promise, threw him into profound despair.[1] His death, according to the most trustworthy historians, was caused by imprudently drinking cold water after having been overheated at a game of tennis, but it was at once attributed to poison, and the King's enemies accused of being the poisoners.

An Italian gentleman, who had been cup-bearer to the Dauphin, was arrested on suspicion, and subjected to torture. He publicly denounced one of the Emperor's generals, the Marquis of Gonzaga, and accused him openly of having induced him to commit the crime; he even went so far as to implicate the Emperor in this sad affair. This was quite enough to increase Francis the First's hatred to Charles the Fifth, who looked for the culprits nearer at hand, and denounced Catherine de Medicis, as wishing thereby to secure the crown to her husband, the Duke of Orleans.[2]

The year 1537 saw the beginning of this quarrel. Francis the First, accusing the Emperor of having violated the treaty of Cambray, which dispensed him from doing homage to the Crown of France for the counties of Flanders and Artois, assembled

[1] See Brantôme, *Vies des Hommes illustres et grands capitaines Francais.*

[2] He afterwards became Henry II.

the French Parliament in solemn conclave, in order to decide upon the question. He also betook himself there, accompanied by the peers and the princes of the blood.

Parliament assembled, the Attorney General made known the chief articles of indictment, and maintained that, the Treaty of Cambray not having had its due effect, Charles of Austria (the name by which he affected to designate the Emperor) was still to be looked upon as a vassal, and was accordingly guilty of rebellion for having taken up arms against his Suzerain. He concluded by a summons to Charles to appear in person before the Parliament of Paris, his rightful tribunal, to reply to this accusation.

This strange requisition was allowed, and a herald repaired to the frontiers of Picardy to summon Charles V. to make his appearance, within a certain prescribed period. This term having expired, and no one having come to plead the cause of the accused, Parliament issued a decree by which it laid down that, Charles of Austria having lost his fiefs through rebellion and contumacy, Flanders and Artois were re-united to the possessions of the Crown. Moreover, this decree was ordered to be published by sound of trumpet on the frontiers of the two provinces.

Directly after this empty display of resentment, Francis the First assembled his troops, and marched upon Flanders to carry out the decree of Parliament, and take possession of the territories which had been awarded to him.

Mary of Austria being unprepared for this invasion, he took possession of the small towns of importance which bordered upon the frontier without striking a blow, amongst others of Hesdin, which was defended by an old captain of the name of Samson. The valour of his followers was such that the nobility would rush to the front without waiting for orders, thus compromising by their thoughtless ardour the success of the expedition. It was there that the Count de Sancerre, whose father had been killed at Marignan, also D'Harcourt's two brothers, and many other young nobles fell, without any profit to the King's service, so that he was obliged to forbid them, on pain of death, to leave the ranks, without having received orders to do so.

The King, forced to leave his army in order to return to other important affairs, allowed the Flemish to regain possession of the greater part of the towns they had lost. They even began to make conquests, and invested the town of Thérouanne. The Duke of Orleans, who had become

Dauphin by the death of his brother, and the great Montmorency,[1] whose valour and important services had lately won for him the dignity of Connétable, set off to relieve the town. Montmorency was within a few miles of the enemy, and a battle was imminent, when a courier from the Queen of Hungary came to inform them of the conclusion of an armistice, asked for by Mary, which was afterwards signed at Bomy.[2]

One of the Queen's delegates on this occasion

[1] This was the famous Montmorency who, after giving proof of his valour at Marignan and Pavia, afterwards became the mortal foe of the Protestant party. His death at the battle of St. Denis was as heroic as his life had been. He had received eight wounds, had lost his horse, and was still fighting against a body of Calvinists, when an officer of high rank made a violent attack upon him. Montmorency broke his sword in his assailant's body at the same moment that a Scottish gentleman of the house of Stuart lodged a pistol bullet in his back. Though mortally wounded, it is said that, turning round, he broke his adversary's jaw. A monk exhorting him—covered with blood and dying—to prepare for death, Montmorency answered him: "Do you think," said he, "that I who have lived eighty years with honour know not how to spend one quarter of an hour in dying?"

[2] The territory of Avesnes was not destined to remain long in peace. In 1543, Francis I., having failed in an attempt upon Avesnes, resolved on beating a retreat, but first sent the Seigneur de Bonneval with two companies of men-at-arms, a regiment of lancers, 2000 infantry, and four cannons to attack the castles of Treslon and Glageon, "where bands of armed men were accustomed to dwell, who carried devastation upon his neighbouring frontiers of Thierache and Picardy. The small garrisons belonging to these castles, be-

was Philip de Lannoy Molembaix, father of the John de Lannoy who had been so intimately connected with Louis de Blois at the University of Louvain, and to whom the translation of St. John Chrysostom had been dedicated.

At the tidings of the French invasion, Louis was plunged into deep uncertainty. Should he leave his religious to come into fatal contact with these soldiers? How was he, in the midst of these disturbances, to continue his work of reform? In order to provide for these invasions to which the vicinity of France exposed the monastery, Dom Gippus had formerly erected houses of refuge at Mons[1] and Ath, capable of receiving a certain number of the religious.

Leaving the abbey, therefore, in charge of safe guardians, Louis proposed to the monks to follow him to Ath.

Many of them, little desirous of reform, took refuge, here and there, in neighbouring convents; three brothers alone declared themselves ready to

lieving that they had to do with the royal troops, surrendered, and the castles were given over to the flames."—*Memoirs of Martin du Bellay.* We shall see presently that Treslon was taken a second time under Henry II., in 1552.

[1] Almost all the abbeys situated on the frontier were provided thus with Priories in the interior of the provinces, where the religious were able to retreat when the country was invaded.

follow their abbot, and subjected themselves to his rule.

Any one else in his place would have been discouraged by this desertion, but, like St. Gertrude, Louis was aware: "That as the ring is the symbol of marriage, in the same way adversity, humbly endured for God's sake, is the real symbol of divine predestination, and becomes a link between the soul and the Divinity. Then the soul in affliction may say in all confidence, 'Jesus Christ, my Lord, has given me this ring as His troth-plight'."

He greeted the humble Priory on his arrival, not as a place of exile, but as a refuge, full of hope. And there it was that, in close communion with his three companions, he was enabled to unfold to them, with that charm of speech and profound erudition, of which all his exhortations bear the stamp, the rule of St. Benedict, which he had made the object of his special study.

The fame of the eminent sanctity of these pious refugees was soon spread abroad, and many religious, ashamed of their sloth, came to submit themselves to the same discipline. The abbot, encouraged by these first successes, and hoping to win back, little by little, the rest of his scattered children, conceived the project of abandoning Liessies, or rather of converting it into a mere

Priory, in order to transfer the Abbacy to Ath, where a new monastery could be constructed, secure from foreign invasion. He would thus have been able to leave the less docile of his religious at the Priory, whilst he kept under his own guidance at Ath those whom he saw ready to lead a life of greater perfection.

He began at once to return to the more primitive observance of the rule of St. Benedict, rejecting all those mitigations which in time had crept in, and to impose it upon all the monks who presented themselves to the monastery.

But trial is the touch-stone of the saints, and Louis de Blois soon met with his. "The history of all times," say the Bollandists, "has proved that no one has ever undertaken an enterprise, profitable for God's glory and the good of souls, without instantly arousing the perverseness of human nature, and the jealousy of the wicked. Our father, St. Benedict himself, experienced it in former times when he saw, whilst endeavouring to establish a new order in the West, not only the worldly, but even men of high ecclesiastical dignity arrayed against him. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that a disciple and zealous follower of St. Benedict should have had to meet with the same hatreds and the same jealousies. Some people taxed him with excess of mortifica-

tion, and found his austerities little adapted to the powers of man. We are not here alluding to the complaints, prompted by vexation, of the monks who returned to Liessies after the war; these declared that it was exchanging an honest liberty for a shameful slavery; others that the body was no longer attended to at all; others that mitigations were abolished which had been permitted from time immemorial; in fine, each one drew up a grievance of his own.

"On the other hand, the devil, jealous of his first successes, as he had incited the bad priest Florent against St. Benedict, so in this same way he raised up, under these circumstances, an adversary to Louis's zeal.

"Some member of a congregation, whose name I shall not mention, attacked Louis de Blois and his disciples openly in the pulpit, giving them the names of impostors, hypocrites, people carried away by ambition, and a number of other abusive epithets, worthier of a cock-pit than of the pulpit."

Like St. Benedict, peace and silence was all the opposition offered by the holy Abbot to the coarse insults of his opponent, who, being denounced by his hearers to the Superior of his Order, was obliged to retract his scandalous discourse, and make reparation.

This reprimand did not suffice to reclaim him; but, no longer daring to speak openly against the Benedictines, he assembled together a number of people, without avowing his intentions, and devastated at their head the gardens of the Priory, breaking the channels by which it was supplied with water.

Notwithstanding these reverses, Louis rejoiced in witnessing proofs of good-will in his religious, whose numbers daily increased. He worked with ardour, examining the works of the Fathers, translating them, and collecting materials for the treatise on Perfection, which he was later on to deliver to his brethren, and which is still lovingly read by the posterity of St. Benedict.[1]

Meanwhile, as the Community of Ath was advancing with rapid strides along the path of perfection, the monks of Liessies and those who had returned thither after the truce, fearing lest the abandonment

[1] Dr. Leglay, in his short notice upon Louis de Blois, maintains that he published his *Speculum Monachorum* during his stay at Ath. On the other hand, the Bollandists speak of it as having appeared after Louis's return to Liessies, by order of Charles V. It had evidently been long in course of preparation, and he had conceived the idea of it from the year 1530; but, though communicating it by fragments to his religious, it seems likely that he did not put it together, or publish it, till after his return to Liessies in 1538. Dom Guéranger has inserted portions of the *Speculum Monachorum* in his *Enchiridion Benedictinum*.

of Liessies should be fatal to their interests, set themselves openly in opposition to the plans of the Abbot de Blois. They found themselves face to face with a problem which they had no means of solving. On the one hand, left without direction at Liessies, they gave proof of the most complete disciplinary relaxation, which made them tremble lest it should cause the ruin of their ancient foundation; whilst, on the other, they dreaded the severe rule which reigned at Ath, and the ascendency of the Reformer.

In their perplexity, they addressed a petition to Charles V., praying him to exert his authority to bring Louis de Blois and his religious back to Liessies, whose sad state they described. They promised that, if the Abbot would mitigate somewhat the austerity of his rule, they would willingly put themselves under his authority, and they gave the highest testimony to his virtues and character.

Their prayer was granted, and Charles V. gave orders to the Abbot to return to Liessies. At this news, Louis was much disturbed, for he saw his long-cherished dreams once more dispelled. He asked himself, whether it would be of more service to the Benedictine Order that he should persevere in the strict rule of perfection with the little flock he had gathered together, or whether it would be better

to mitigate a little of its severity in order to carry the necessary help to Liessies. "He treated this question maturely," say his historians, "between God and his own soul. After much reflection, he thought it would be more for the glory of God to give way to the desires of his religious at Liessies, and the Emperor's order. He wrote, therefore, to the monks of the old monastery, that, since they were convinced of the necessity of some reform, he conjured them to accept his, which he would moderate in such manner as grave men, of known learning and virtue, would advise. This gracious promise gained over to Louis the good-will of those hitherto opposed to him."[1]

He returned, therefore, to Liessies, whither his heart led him, and where his brethren, who, notwithstanding their supineness, nourished a tender affection for him, awaited him with impatience. He assembled together at once men of great enlightenment and the most competent to the task, and from their advice he drew the following conclusions:—That nothing violent can last,—that conduct regulated by prudence and moderation gives solid pledges of perseverance for the future,—that the powers of the body are not equal in all

[1] See the Bull, approving of, and reproducing a great part of Louis de Blois's statutes, in the Appendix.

cases to the generous aspirations of the soul,—that, finally, one must make less account of one's own fervour than of that of the religious, whose advancement and salvation one must first of all seek.

Louis, perfectly resigned to God's good pleasure, received these counsels as coming straight from heaven, and adopted a mitigated rule, which, whilst preserving the special spirit of St. Benedict, made due allowance for man's physical infirmities.

The world has chosen to see proofs of the decay of the monastic spirit in these reforms of the Benedictine Order, though, taking the increasing weakness of the human race into consideration, it became clearly a necessity to diminish these too rigorous fasts, and shorten the unduly prolonged vigils. In quoting the perfectly impartial testimony of Erasmus, Montalembert justly remarks, that when the monks are reproached for having degenerated from their first fervour and primitive austerities, it is forgotten how much less the majority of modern Christians resemble the Christians of the primitive Church.[1] "The proofs are not wanting," add

[1] "Do you ask me, my brethren," said again Mgr. Pie, "whether the primitive rule of St. Benedict is here observed in all its strictness? I can reply to you that the general discipline of the faithful in the time of St. Benedict scarcely differed from that observed in monasteries; and that, when the mitigations sanctioned by the

Louis de Blois's historians, "that the venerable Abbot met with no less honour among men on this question, than he had merit before God. It is related that he was praised by illustrious Bishops, for having sacrificed his own ideas, and restrained the impetuosity of his desires. It will be unnecessary for us here to recall innumerable examples which exist of men, who, in like manner having begun by professing a very austere discipline, have been obliged after a time to moderate its rigour."

Church, and in common use amongst Christians of the present day, are considered, we see how much more in advance of you are the monks of the congregation of France, such as they have been canonically established by authority of the Holy See, in point of austerity of life, than their predecessors were, compared with your forefathers. Let us trust to the wisdom of our Holy Mother the Church, and if, in consequence of the more general weakness of men's constitutions, and the cooling of their fervour in the faith, her compassionate spirit is so largely exerted in our behalf, let us not inveigh against her for throwing open the portals of the more perfect life to a greater number of the weak. For my part, I can never lose sight of the grand maxims of St. Benedict, nor does it surprise me that the Church herself should have been inspired by them, *miscens temporibus tempora.* Taking into consideration the difference of times, and tempering all things by the exercise of that Mother of virtues—discretion, so that the strong may be urged forward to doing more, and the weak have nothing to keep them back, *sic omnia temperet, ut si quod et fortes cupiant et infirmi non refugiant."—Funeral Oration of Dom Guéranger.*

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CHAPTER VI.

THE "MIRROR FOR MONKS"—LOUIS DE BLOIS'S CONSTITUTIONS ARE APPROVED OF BY THE POPE.

HE monks of Liessies having accepted a reform by which they were for evermore bound, Louis de Blois betook himself to the work of drawing up and correcting the statutes which he was desirous of submitting to the approval of the Holy See. He continued to read extracts from his writings in the chapter-room, passing them off to the religious as the work of a solitary of the eighth century. The Abbot took good care that the real name of the mysterious Abbot of the Order of St. Benedict, Dacryanus, should not come to light, and when he published his delightful treatise at Louvain, it was under the title of "A Mirror for Monks," an inedited work of Dacryanus, Abbot of the Order of St. Benedict.[1]

[1] Speculum monachorum, a Dacryano ordinis Sancti Benedicti Abbate conscriptum, antehac nunquam excusum (Barth. Gravius 1538, in 8vo). It was evidently this title which gave grounds for the opinions held by Marguerin de la Bigne and Anthony Possevin, who both assert that in the eighth century there existed an Abbot Dacryanus of the Order of St. Benedict.

This treatise of perfection in the cloister, addressed to a monk of the name of Odo, is of all Louis de Blois's productions the best known and the most remarkable. It was received with enthusiasm, not only in monasteries, to which by right it belonged, and where it found its obvious application, but also among the secular clergy and pious laity. His century, to which Cardinal Bellarmine has with justice given the name of the "Age of Saints," since it saw St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis Borgia, St. Ignatius, the Blessed Canisius, St. Philip Neri, St. Camillus of Lellis, and the sweet St. Francis of Sales, proclaimed Louis de Blois to be a shining light of the spiritual life.

If, in those stormy times, a seditious leaven was at work against the Church—scandals openly displaying themselves in broad daylight,—they called forth a glorious reply in the cause of virtue and courage. If wretched sovereigns, such as Henry VIII., presented to Europe the degraded spectacle of royal adultery, others, though not without their failings, still possessed true feelings of honour, and among them we may certainly rank Francis I.

The spirit of chivalry was not extinct. Kings swore by "the word and honour of a gentleman,"[1]

[1] Francis I.'s favourite oath was "Foi de gentilhomme". "I have read among the papers of our house the oaths of the four Kings:

and wished to receive the title of knight from the bravest of their followers,[1] and when betrayed by fortune, rather than tamely submit, they would charge the enemy, and rush into the thickest of the Spanish battalions, courting the death which out of respect for their valour seemed to shun them.

It was the time when Charles V., trusty guardian of a faith purchased with the blood of so many martyrs, forced errors which then had hardly taken root to disappear for ever from Seville and Valladolid. It was the time when that perfect courtier, that valiant soldier, who had cultivated as much the graces of the mind as the arts of politics and war, the Marquis de Lombay, hereditary Duke of Gandia, struck by a sudden impulse whilst conducting the Empress Isabella to her last home, took the habit of St. Ignatius, and became one of the first Fathers of the new Institute, and its third General, under the revered name of Francis Borgia. Others, wearing this same habit, carried the Cross of Christ to unknown shores, and the century was not to finish without seeing the rise of the author of

Quand 'la Pasque-Dieu' décéda (Louis XI.), par le 'jour Dieu' lui succéda (Charles VIII.), le 'diable m'emporte' s'en tint près (Louis XII.), 'Foi de gentilhomme' vint après."—*Brantôme.*

[1] Francis I. chose to have himself knighted by Bayard on the field of Marignan.

"The Introduction to a Devout Life," to the full plenitude of his genius.

With all its shortcomings, therefore, the age was not unfitted to appreciate Louis de Blois's great work, and it surprises one no longer to hear of the knights, instanced by Jacques Froye in the preface of his works, as having taken pleasure in reading them.

In fine, Charles V. in his travels was never separated from his favourite author, and carried his book with him, says Jacques Froye, as Alexander carried his Iliad.[1] Philip II. recommended it to his daughter on his death-bed, and St. Francis de Sales writes: "I have read the works of Blosius with incredible relish; read them, I entreat of you, and study them well".

From the seventeenth century, when he was so highly extolled by Fenelon and Bossuet, the fame of Louis de Blois began to die out, except in Belgium where it still lives. It is true that a Jesuit, Membroux de la Nauze, translated "Le Dacryanus" in 1726, under the name of the "Director of Pious Souls," but the time of those tender effusions of the soul was over, they were to give place to the sceptical sneering of a Voltaire.

[1] Preface of Louis de Blois's works, edition of the year 1615 of Bernard Gauthier, Cologne.

In our days a perfect translation of it has been given to us by Felicité de Lamennais, preceded by a remarkable preface, of which the following passages are extracts: "There is no Christian, in whatever station of life he may be, who could not read it and meditate upon it with profit. All the precepts of spiritual life, every counsel which could lead to perfection, are found here assembled, and, we do not fear to add, put before us with a charm of language which renders them attractive, without any mixture of that scholastic dryness which disfigures so often the best works of this description. We are not aware of any, not even excepting the 'Following of Christ,' superior as it is in other respects, which unites sweetness, tenderness, vivacity of sentiment, and unaffected simplicity of expression, in the same degree. One sees, one feels everywhere that the author is profoundly penetrated by the truths which he utters, 'for the heart of the wise shall instruct his mouth, and shall add grace to his lips'.[1]

"This heartfelt conviction, joined to this moving unction, is to our mind one of the most striking characteristics of ascetical works, characteristics which distinguish them from man's ordinary productions, and seem to place them in a cer-

[1] Prov. Chap. XVI. 23.

tain degree on the same level with the Sacred Scriptures. May we be allowed to develop this thought of ours more fully?

"God preserve us from pretending to establish any parallel between sacred writers and spiritual ones, or of attributing to the latter an inspiration which the Church only recognises in the former. But, without offending in any way against faith, may one not suppose that men of such eminent sanctity, men whose conversation was wholly in heaven, whom the Lord hid in the sanctuary of His Face, and upon whom He showered His choicest gifts; may one not suppose, we say, that these men, or rather these angels of the earth, interiorly enlightened by the eternal splendour, refreshed and vivified by that celestial light like dew, of which the prophet speaks, have let fall some drops thereof in their writings, so that it is less their voices that speak, than the voice of God Himself? Everything about them, their thoughts, their language, betrays a celestial origin. No, it is not thus that man speaks—with so much grandeur he has not so much simplicity, nor so much peace with so much love. This divine union of simplicity and sublimity, of ardour and of tranquillity, is also a distinctive quality of the ascetic writers. They alone know how to touch and move the soul with-

out in any way disturbing its peace. The eloquence of man, impassioned because it addresses itself to the passions, heats, exalts, shakes, and upsets; its force is in its violence, it is a torrent which breaks hearts, and rends and carries them away in its course.

"But listen to a poor monk, speaking about Jesus Christ: his brow is calm and serene, his words tender, simple, and yet, before he has spoken many words, you feel your very soul moved and your tears flow gently. How is it possible, with means apparently so feeble, to produce such marvellous effects? In order to explain this miracle of the spiritual world, it would be necessary to unveil the pious and fervent soul to its very depths, it would be necessary to enter into the secrets of grace, to show by what hidden paths and mysterious channels it communicates itself, and passes from one heart to another—all ineffable things, the power of knowing and revealing which is given to but very few."[1]

We shall now give the fifth and most touching chapter of the "Mirror for Monks" from De Lamennais' translation of it. It will be sufficient for us to say that this treatise of the spiritual life, from which

[1] See Preface to the *Guide Spirituel*, 2nd edition, published by A. Bray. Paris, 1860.

all the faithful might derive benefit, is divided by the translator into eight parts, and that we strongly recommend those who wish to become acquainted with Louis de Blois' works to read this translation of them, which is as faithful as it is elegant, and which is worthy of the marvellous pen of the unfortunate De Lamennais.

Chapter V. of the "Mirror for Monks".

"The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ should be the principal subject of mental prayer.[1]

"All prayers, singing of hymns, thanksgiving, and holy meditations are profitable. But by consent of all the remembrance of Christ's Humanity, and especially of His most sacred Passion, is said to be most profitable and only necessary, and with justice. For it is the present extermination of passions and inordinate affections, a fit refuge in temptation and surest safeguard in dangers, a sweet refreshing in distress, a friendly rest from labour, a gentle repressing of distractions, the true door of sanctity, the only entry to contemplation, the sweet consolation of the soul, the unfailing flame of divine love,

[1] The translation of the above chapter into English is taken from one which was published in Paris in 1676—authorship unknown—and which was lately edited, with Preface, by Sir John Coleridge. London: Stewart, 1872.

the salver of all adversities, the fountain of all virtues, from whence they flow to us: to conclude, the absolute example of all perfection, the haven, hope, trust, merit, and salvation of all Christians.

"I knew a monk, whose custom was to propose to himself every day some part of our Lord's Passion, as, for example, one day he would set before his eyes Christ's being in the Garden. And whithersoever he went that day, wheresoever he chanced to be, if not troubled with any other serious and necessary cogitation, whatsoever he did outwardly, he took a special care to direct his internal eye to our Lord suffering distresses in the Garden, and thus would he talk with his soul: And my soul, behold thy God! Behold, daughter, attend, see, and consider, most dear! Behold thy God, behold thy Creator, behold thy Father, behold thy Redeemer and Saviour! Behold thy refuge, behold thy defender and protector, behold thy hope, trust, strength, and health! Behold thy sanctification, purity, and perfection! Behold thy help, merit, and reward! Behold thy tranquillity, consolation, and sweetness! Behold thy joy, thy delights, and thy life! Behold thy light, thy crown, and thy glory! Behold thy love and thy desire! Behold thy treasure and all thy good! Behold thy beginning and thy end! Whither art thou scattered, thou wandering daugh-

ter? How long wilt thou leave the light and love darkness? How long wilt thou forsake peace and involve thyself in troubles? Return, return, thou Sunamite, return! Daughter, return and recollect thyself, most dear! Leave many things and embrace one—for one thing is necessary for thee. Abide with thy Lord; place thyself by thy God; go not from thy Master; sit in His shadow whom thou lovest, that His fruit may be sweet to thy throat. It is good for thee to be here, daughter. For hither the enemy cannot make his approach; here are no snares, no dangers, no darkness. All things are here safe, all things calm. Reside here willingly, most dear. For here thou shalt be safe and free, thou shalt be merry and joyful. Here are roses, lilies, and violets; here flowers of all virtues do smell most pleasantly. Here thou shalt see a brightness sweetly enlightening all things with his rays. Here thou shalt find true consolation; here thou shalt find peace and rest. To conclude, here thou shalt find all good?

"With such short sentences he would both sharply and sweetly spur forward his soul, and call her home when she was wandering abroad, and force her to apply herself to the chiefest good. Of these little sentences he would take sometimes more, sometimes fewer, sometimes only one, sometimes

two, sometimes three, according to the fervour of his devotion and the pleasure of the Holy Ghost, and he would oftentimes iterate and repeat them. He would also force his soul to the remembrance of those things which our Saviour did and suffered for her in the Garden. In the meantime, one while exciting her to the considerations of our Saviour's unsearchable humility, mildness, patience, most fervent and incomprehensible charity; another while to take compassion on our Lord of infinite majesty, so humbled and afflicted, and then again to thank Him for so great benefits and piety; another while to repay love with love, and anon to ask pardon for her sins, and then to beg this or that grace. He would often convert his speech to these or the like affectionate or fervent aspirations: And my soul, when wilt thou be ready to follow the humility of thy Lord? When wilt thou imitate His mildness? When shall the example of His patience shine in thee? When wilt thou be better? When wilt thou be free from passions and vicious affections? When shall evil be destroyed in thee? When shall all inordinateness be blotted out in thee? When wilt thou peaceably and gently endure all tribulation and temptation? When wilt thou perfectly love thy God? When wilt thou intimately embrace Him? When wilt thou be

wholly swallowed up in His love? When wilt thou be pure, simple, and reserved before Him? How long will it be ere thou be hindered no more from His most chaste embracings? and that thou were immaculate; and that thou didst fervently love thy God; and that thou didst inseparably cleave unto thy chiefest good. And then directing the eye of his heart to Heaven, or to the depth of eternal light, he would frame these aspirations: And my soul, where is thy God? Where is thy love? Where is thy treasure? Where is thy desire? Where is thy total good? When shalt thou see Him? When shalt thou most happily enjoy Him? When shalt thou freely praise Him with all the citizens of heaven? These and the like aspirations would he secretly speak either mentally or with his lips, taking sometimes more, sometimes fewer, according to the internal motions of the Holy Ghost. He would also often accuse his soul, that it was too slow, sluggish, tepid, ungrateful, hard, insensible, and unhappy. Again he would comfort it, being dejected with pusillanimity or fear, and would encourage it with these or the like words: Despair not my soul, take comfort, daughter, and be confident, most dear. If thou hast sinned and art wounded, behold thy God! behold thy Physician is ready to cure thee. He is most

courteous and most merciful, and therefore willing; He is omnipotent, and therefore can pardon thy sins in a moment. Peradventure thou art afraid because He is thy Judge; but take heart, for He that is thy Judge is also thine Advocate. He is thy Advocate to defend and excuse thee, doing penance; He is, therefore, also thy Judge to save, not to condemn thee, being humbled. His mercy is infinitely greater than thy iniquity either is or can be. Which words I say not that, persevering in evil, thou shouldst make thyself unworthy of His mercy; but that, being averted from evil, thou shouldst not despair of indulgence and forgiveness. Thy God is most gentle, most sweet; He is wholly amiable, wholly desirable, and wonderfully loveth all things which He hath created. When thou thinkest of Him or conceivest Him in thy memory, far be all imagination of terror, austerity, and bitterness from thee. When we say He is terrible, it is not in respect of Himself, but of those that abuse His patience and defer to do penance, whose most bitter and poisonous sins, as contrary to His most sweet and pure goodness, He repelleth and punisheth. Let not thine imperfections discourage thee too much; for thy God doth not despise thee because thou art imperfect and infirm, but loveth thee exceedingly because thou desirest and labourest to be

more perfect. He will also help thee if thou persistest in thy good intention, and will make thee perfecter — yea, peradventure (which thou little hopest for), wholly fair and every way pleasing to Him.

"Thus, and in innumerable other ways, would he friendly talk with his soul, and invite her by chaste speeches to the chaste love of her Beloved. He would also turn his speech to our Lord, and aspiring to Him by holy love, would say: And good Jesus, pious Pastor, sweet Master, King of eternal glory, when shall I be immaculate and truly humble before Thee? When shall I truly despise all sensible things for Thee, and when shall I perfectly forsake myself? When shall I be stripped of all propriety? For, unless there were propriety in me, there would not be self-will in me: passions and inordinate affections would have no place in me. I should not seek myself in anything. Propriety only maketh the impediment and medium between Thee and me; propriety only doth hinder Thee from me. When, therefore, shall I cast off all propriety? When shall I freely resign myself to Thy divine pleasure? When shall I serve Thee with a clean, quiet, simple, and calm mind? When shall I perfectly love Thee in the arms of my soul? When shall I love Thee with most fervent desire? When

shall all my tepidity and imperfection be swallowed up by the immensity of Thy love? O my desire, my treasure, O my total good, O my beginning and end, O my God, O sweetness of my soul, O my consolation, my life, my love! Oh, that my soul might enjoy Thy most sweet embracings! Oh, that it were indissolubly bound with Thy love; would it were perfectly united to Thee. For what is to me in heaven, and besides Thee what would I upon earth, God of my heart, and God my portion for ever? When shall the world be silent to me? When shall the impediments, troubles, and vicissitudes of this life cease to me? When shall my pilgrimage be ended? When shall my sojourning be consummated? When shall the miserable captivity of this banishment be dissolved? When shall the shadow of mortality decrease, and the day of eternity draw near? When shall I lay down the burthen of this body and see Thee? When shall I praise Thee as Thy Saints, without impediment, happily and eternally? O my God, my love, my total good! He was often wont to use such aspirations, knowing that by the exercise of them the human spirit is more effectually united to the divine spirit, and that thereby man attaineth the sooner to the perfect mortification of himself. He had them ready everywhere; but if at any time he had more

sufficient leisure, he would then (sitting as Mary Magdalen did) rejoice to linger more freely, and that more to the honour of God than to the inordinate pleasing of himself. He would not in the meantime omit, with a certain internal effusion of heart, by a sincere and sweet affection, to adore, bless, give thanks, and pray. Moreover, turning his speech to the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, as to a most merciful lady, and most liberal stewardess of heavenly treasures, he would redouble his pious complaints before her, and, with a holy importunity, extort a benediction. Another day he would set before himself how our Saviour, betrayed by Judas, was taken, and concerning this point he would iterate his foresaid exercises, and so would go through with the Passion in order, and having ended would begin again. And about that part of the Passion which did represent Christ hanging on the Cross, he did not employ himself in order, and in his proper day, but every day at least briefly, if so be he thought it convenient, exciting his soul to the earnest contemplation of these things. On every solemnity of our Saviour or the Blessed Virgin he would (if he thought it good) propose to the eyes of his mind the representation of that feast instead of part of our Lord's Passion, which otherwise was that day to be frequented, and would

perform his internal exercises or friendly discourses with his soul, and about the work, cause, mystery, and joy of that festivity. He was also much delighted with singing the Psalms. And I know that, by the continued custom of this holy exercise, he reaped consolation and singular profit of his labours.

"I will set down an example; imitate of it, if you please. For by this means you shall be accustomed to apprehend the presence of God; by this means you shall begin to have your senses sober, watchful, exercised, and calm; by this means you shall prepare yourself a way to the highest contemplation and perfection. Thus, wheresoever you are, you shall spend your time profitably, vague and unstable cogitations being cast forth out of the corners of your heart, and such as are serious being entertained in their place. You may frame your self-meditations and aspirations in other terms than we have. If you perceive the looking in your book to hinder your mind, whereby you are the less able to reach God and to be united to Him, lay aside your book. Again, if you perceive it doth farther your exercise, make use of it, for I would that your devotion should be free to you, and that you should follow the grace of the Holy Ghost without confusion or anxiety. Moreover, by aspirations (as you may

perceive by the above-written copies) we understand certain short ejaculatory prayers, or burning desires, and lively and loving affections to God. He that hath not as yet undertaken the beginning of internal conversation, and his own mortification, or hath at least but newly begun, ought not peradventure so precisely to follow this rule.

"But it shall be expedient for him to exercise himself for a while according to this manner which I shall prescribe. Let him, therefore, every day propose to himself some part of our Saviour's Passion, and let him study to have recourse in mind to the same whether he stand, go, sit, or rest, unless he have some other profitable or necessary thing in his heart to treat of. And let him often discourse with his soul in the presence of Christ suffering, either thus, or after the like manner—O my soul, behold thy God, behold ungrateful, attend thou wretch, consider thou poor soul, behold thy God, behold thy Creator and Redeemer; behold how the King of eternal glory humbled Himself for thee; behold how the highest Majesty debased himself for thee; see what sorrow, bitterness, and indignities thy Saviour suffereth for thee; consider with what charity He loved thee, Who undertook so great calamity and affliction for thee. Arise, my soul, arise out of the dust, slip thy head out of the collar, thou captive

daughter of Sion. Arise, forsake the puddle of thy vices, and leave the uncleanness of thy negligent life. How long will thou take pleasure in perils? How long wilt thou esteem anxiety and torments to be rest? How long wilt thou securely sleep in destruction? How long wilt thou willingly leave the right way and wander abroad far and near by unknown places? Return unto the Lord thy God, for He expecteth thee; make haste, be not slack, for He is ready to receive thee; He will meet thee with open arms, only defer not thou to return. Come to Jesus, and He will heal and purify thee. Join thyself to Jesus, and He will illuminate thee. Adhere to Jesus, and He will bless and save thee. Sometimes let him more expressly upbraid his soul of ingratitude, and perverseness, saying—Alas! my soul, how ungrateful hast thou been to thy God. He hath bestowed innumerable and most admirable benefits upon thee, and thou still repayest evil for good. He hath created thee according to His own image and likeness; He hath endowed thee with immortality; He hath deputed heaven and earth and all things contained in them to thy commodity; He hath enriched thee with many gifts and graces; He hath brought thee to the light of the Catholic faith; He hath withdrawn thee from the dangerous waves of the world, and conveyed thee to the

haven and tranquillity of a monastical life, where thou (as in a most sweet paradise of spiritual pleasures) might have infinite occasion of holy joy and good works; He hath patiently borne with thee grievously sinning, and hath preserved thee from the jaws of hell. The King hath been incarnate for thee; thy Creator for thy sake hath become thy Brother.

"Neither did He think it sufficient to be born for thee, wherefore would He also suffer for thy sake. He endured sorrows and distresses for thy sake; He was spit on and buffeted for thy sake. He was scourged and wounded with a crown of thorns; for thy sake He was smitten with a reed, and laden with the burthen of the cross; for thy sake He was nailed to the cross and drank vinegar; for thy sake He wept and shed His most holy blood; for thy sake He died and was buried. He hath adopted thee to be heir of the kingdom of heaven; He hath promised those things unto thee which neither eye hath seen, nor heart of man can comprehend. But thou hast left and condemned Him who hath been so many ways beneficial to thee; thou hast cast away the holy fear of Him that loved thee; thou hast shaken off His sweet yoke that hath elected thee; thou art become as one of the daughters of Belial, as an impudent harlot; thou hast worshipped

iniquities, without modesty; thou hast compacted with death; thou hast given thy hand to the devil; thou hast been most prompt to all wickedness; thou hast heaped evil upon evil, and hast rejoiced to add worse to the worst. By thy wickedness thou hast again crucified Jesus Christ, Who hath chosen thee for His spouse; thou hast renewed His wounds by thy crimes. Who will give thee groans and sighs? Who will give thee a spring of tears, that thou mayest night and day bewail thine ingratitude? O unhappy wretch, what wilt thou do? Oh, that thou hadst kept thyself in the state of innocency, and that thou hadst remained immaculate! Oh, that thou hadst not miserably defiled thyself with dishonesty; Oh, that thou hadst not gone astray from thy God! Thou hast lost thine innocency; thou art defiled; thou art become dishonest, thou hast gone astray from thy God. Alas! poor wretch, and what wilt thou do? To whom wilt thou fly? From whom wilt thou expect help? From whom but from Him whom thou hast offended? He is most pitiful, most courteous, most merciful. Humble thyself, pour out thyself like water in His sight, and He will take pity on thee. Sometimes let him turn his lamentations to our Lord with these or the like words—Alas! my Lord Jesus, what have I done! How have I left Thee! How

have I despised Thee! How am I become forgetful of Thy name! How have I cast aside Thy name! How have I cast aside Thy fear! How have I trod Thy law under my feet! How have I transgressed Thy precepts. O me, my God; O me, my Creator! O me, my Saviour! O me, my Life and my total Good! Woe be to me, wretched creature! Woe be to me, woe be to me, because I have sinned! Woe be to me, because I have made myself like to a brute beast! Woe be to me, because I am become more silly than a sheep! O Good Jesus! O loving Shepherd! O sweet Master, help me! Set me on my feet, stretch forth Thy hand to me, being in danger. Cleanse me from my filth, cure my wound, confirm my weakness, save me from destruction. I confess myself unworthy to tread on the earth, I am unworthy to behold the light, I am unworthy of Thy aid and grace. For great is mine ingratitude—great, yea, too great is the enormity of my sins. Nevertheless, Thy mercy is infinitely greater. Therefore, O God, Thou lover of mankind, my only hope, have mercy on me according to Thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of Thy mercies take away mine iniquity."

These readings from the "Speculum Monachorum" and the wise counsels of the Abbot had restored the

community to the true path of perfection, which, for the edification of Belgium, they were ever afterwards to pursue. Confident of the future, Louis de Blois was able to promulgate from the year 1539 the statutes of his reform, which were definitively approved of, and confirmed by a Bull of Paul III., under the date of April 8, 1545.[1]

In the Introduction, which precedes these statutes, he explains the conditions which he found necessary to make.

"Our statutes," he says, "which have been confirmed and approved of by a Papal Bull, show how mild and easy is our way of life, and how far removed from all excessive control. This rule of life, and this much mitigated reform have been established and introduced in our days, so that the rule in its integrity may be better observed by all our brethren, and so that there may be less obstacles to its duration. Moreover, those who feel themselves fortified and inspired by divine grace can perfectly well give themselves up here to austerity and abstinence; for example, the brethren, though allowed to eat twice a-day, can easily impose privations on themselves in their second repast. Our way of life should not be despised because it is mild and easy, because sanctity and perfection do not, pro-

[1] See Appendix, Note IV.

perly speaking, consist so much in great austerity as in purity of heart and a true humility. If it were otherwise, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, would not have been perfect, as nowhere do we read of her leading an austere life, like that of St. John the Baptist. Certainly those who are possessed of a solid piety, and who desire to occupy themselves seriously with the good of their souls, can even with great facility make progress here in virtue, and be agreeable to God; for in this place they are sheltered from innumerable occasions of sin, and they hear many spiritual lectures every day. But those, whose hearts are proud and hardened, who make no use of the opportunities they have of leading a good life, neglect their salvation in a deplorable manner, whether they belong to an easy Order or to an austere one."

Such is the wise prologue to Louis de Blois's statutes. He adds, in very plain and downright terms, a prohibition to his successors to make any change in the rule of life he had laid down, since he is convinced that there is nothing so difficult in his rule that the weakest and the most delicate constitution could not follow. He cites the following testimony of Florent le Chartreux in support of this: "You should persuade yourselves thoroughly that all religious orders, as far as their object and

essence is concerned, are but one and the same Order, for all take their point of departure from God, and are formed on the model of the life of our Lord, and of the Apostles. There is no reason to doubt that through God's grace you may not please Him as well in a monastery of an easy, as in another of a much more austere observance." And Louis de Blois concludes by saying: "These words, which proceed from a man closely united to God, should not be passed over unreflectingly by any one".

He quotes also the example of St. Pacomius who received his rule from the lips of an angel; and, as he seemed to complain in his generous ardour that our Lord gave his monks so light a burthen to carry, the angel answered him in words which might have come from Louis de Blois's own lips: "I have made rules which the weakest can stand without difficulty. As for the perfect, they are not in want of this law. For in the seclusion of their cells, they can give themselves up without respite to prayer and become absorbed in the contemplation of God."

CHAPTER VII.

LOUIS DE BLOIS'S STUDIES—TAULERUS—BLESSED HENRY SUSO—RUSBROCK—ST. GERTRUDE AND HER WRITINGS—THE SPIRITUAL READINGS OF THE COMMUNITY—THE EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS—THE JESUITS PENETRATE INTO BELGIUM—THEY MEET WITH HOSTILITY—LETTER OF THE ABBOT OF LIESSIES TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL.

XAMPLE, as he had already said, being the best means of insuring the observation of the rule, Louis de Blois lived up to his new statutes with the greatest possible exactitude, assisting, as much as his numerous occupations, and the obligation he was under of entertaining guests of distinction permitted, at the services, meals, and all the other exercises of the community.

He kept the love of God alive in his heart, by following the exercises of St. Ignatius, which he preferred to all others. The means he had recourse to, after prayer and meditation, in order to increase his devotion, and which he also recommended to his monks, was that of spiritual reading. The Holy Scriptures held the first rank in his estimation, and

one may apply to him, says his historian, the praise given by St. Jerome to Nepotian, that through study and meditation he had made of his heart a true library of Jesus Christ.

Next to the Scriptures came the regular study of the holy fathers—particularly of the works of St. Gregory, and of St. Augustine.

He had also a great love for those three mystical writers of the fourteenth century, whose supernatural life and vehement preaching have left an imperishable memory in Germany. Two amongst them, the Blessed Henry Suso and Taulerus, belonged to the Order of St. Dominic. "Suso," says his historian, "lived in a lonely convent in the old city of Constance, which is built on the edge of the most desolate lake in Switzerland. Hardly anything is known of his outer life, and one must consult the traditions of the locality in order to discover any trace that is left of it. He belonged to that grand mystical school which a woman, a friend of St. Bernard, St. Hildegard, had inaugurated in Germany, and which had borne incomparable flowers, amidst the troubles even of the fourteenth century, on its ever vigorous stem."[1]

Suso, though producing immense effect upon his hearers by his severe and daring language, did not

[1] *Life of the B. Henry Suso*, by Chavin.

possess[1] Taulerus's theological acquirements, but his constant intercourse with the supernatural world gave a singular effect and power to his discourses. These two Dominicans sought constantly the company of the other great mystical writer, the venerable Rusbrock, who lovingly preserved in the depths of his retreat, in the forest of Vauvert, the traditions of true asceticism.

These three men, the fire of whose love and zeal had lighted up the whole of Germany, served as models to Louis de Blois, who belongs directly to their school, always approaching nearer to Taulerus, whom he resembled in his erudition and scientific acquirements.

But it was for the works of the great St. Gertrude that he reserved the full plenitude of his admiration. Germany was also her birth-place, where she preceded B. Henry Suso by a century. Placed from her earliest infancy in one of those Benedictine retreats which were, in the middle ages, so many homes of science and enlightenment, the education received by St. Gertrude was of so thorough a nature, that she was able to astonish and puzzle the most learned Doctors of the Church. "Gifted

[1] Taulerus having been attacked by John Echius, a celebrated controversialist of the sixteenth century, Louis de Blois took up his defence, and convinced his readers of Taulerus's orthodoxy.

with a moving eloquence, to which the holiness of her life gave additional force, she drew all hearts to herself, and an irresistible influence secured the triumph for which her sweetness and humility had prepared the way."[1] In the short Preface, which the much regretted Dom Guéranger has placed at the beginning of her "Exercises," one should read a sketch of this life, of the numerous favours received by her from our Lord, and of the divine illuminations with which He deigned to enlighten His servant.

Louis de Blois has profited more by the works of St. Gertrude than by those of any of the other mystical writers. The continual warfare, waged by Suso and Rusbrock against the analytical and inquiring spirit of their times, has communicated a kind of restless ardour to their writings, which affects the soul less peacefully than that liberty of spirit, that perfection of calm, that gentle authority which makes no claim and yet carries all before it, of which St. Gertrude and her disciple have discovered the secret. "No one can be at all acquainted," says Fr. Faber, "with the old-fashioned Benedictine school of spiritual writers, without perceiving and admiring the beautiful liberty of spirit which pervades and possesses their whole minds . . . St. Gertrude is a fair specimen of them, she is

[1] Dom Guéranger. Preface to the *Exercises of St. Gertrude*.

thoroughly Benedictine. . . . A spirit of breadth, a spirit of liberty, that is the Catholic spirit, and it was eminently the badge of the old Benedictine ascetics. Modern writers for the most part have tightened things, and have lost by it instead of gaining."[1]

"The school, to which Fr. Faber here alludes," adds Dom Guéranger, "and which has for basis the rule of the Patriarch of the Monks of the West, begins with St. Gregory the Great, and ends with Louis de Blois, by whom it is worthily closed."

Tilman Bredenbach, a Doctor of Theology, who brought out in 1579 an edition of the works of St. Gertrude, says in his Preface: "The very learned and pious Louis de Blois, with whom I was well acquainted, read these books with lively devotion at least twelve times a-year, as I was informed by one of his most intimate companions. John de Castinizza, Abbot of our Order in Spain, testifies to the same effect."

Not satisfied with a private study of these authors, Louis de Blois enjoined that they should be made the subject of a general spiritual lecture three times a day; first, at table during the whole of meal-time, so that the soul also, he said, should receive its spiritual food. Whenever he was not

[1] *All for Jesus*, Chap. VIII.

drawn away from the Community-table for the reception of strangers, he came to take part in it. In fine, when entertaining his guests at the abbatial table itself, he always had some work, instructive or interesting according to the tastes of his visitors, read aloud. In the afternoon after recreation, he assembled his monks in the chapter-room, and read some passage from an ascetical author during the space of a quarter of an hour; at the close of day before Complin this lecture was renewed.[1]

His watchful superintendence of the general and particular libraries was extreme, never tolerating the introduction into them of any works capable of injuring the piety of the brethren, or of exciting amongst them a harmful curiosity. "Do not seek," he used to say, "in spiritual reading the empty attractions of style, but rather the solid piety of the soul. I do not condemn ornaments of speech, but I find fault with the judgment of certain monks who can only take pleasure in what is written in an

[1] Regularia exercitia sacræ lectionis in mensa conventuali et post meridiem atque ante completorium diligenter sunt servanda, neque aliter quam sanctæ observantiæ ratio admittit, omitti vel intermitti debent. Nullâ ratione, monachi tenere debent libros hereticos, damnatos, impudicos vel Christianis monachisque prorsus indignos; nisi forte alicui prudenti ad examinandum pro evidenti utilitate concessi fuerint, ab eo qui concedere potest. Article 19 of Statutes of Liessies approved of by Paul III. under date of 1545. Extract of copy of Papal bull preserved in the Archives of Lille.

elegant style of diction." And then, having gone on to say that it is through the Holy Scriptures, whose language is simple and whose doctrine is plainly expressed, that the true progress of the interior life is to be sought, he adds: "The dispositions of a true monk should be of such a nature that he should not wish to know anything, and that he should not think he knew anything, but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified."

After spiritual lecture, prayer was the chief solace and food of Louis de Blois's soul. Thanks to long practice, he could, whatever might be the occupation of the moment, unite himself in heart to Jesus. "There is," he says in the 'Mirror for Monks,' "a holy and a praiseworthy idleness, it is when the soul, profoundly recollected in God, far removed from the noise and distractions of sensible objects, reposes itself deliciously in the arms of the Beloved."[1]

[1] God, who is the true happiness of man, has in truth created him for this sole object, that he may one day forget himself in Him; so as to lose not his proper life or his personality, but all other sentiments excepting those of the Divine Presence and Beauty. Thus there are here below not only for the saints, who experience a foretaste of the invisible beatitude by a premature possession of God, but for us also sinners, and imperfect souls, there are ecstacies, because there are sudden and intense joys. A mother in seeing her son once more, forgets herself, she sees him, she touches him, she possesses him, it is in truth her son, and the hours flow for her with the charm of that fabled stream which took away the memory.—Lacordaire. *De la vi. des passions.*

In this blessed state, his heart inflamed with divine love, he addressed to God those touching prayers which would lose much in a French translation, so great is their charm, written in the beautiful Latin of the sixteenth century. The following from the "Enchiridion parvulorum" is given in M. Léon Gautier's "Recueil de Prières".

PRAYER OF LOUIS DE BLOIS.

"If I was worthy of loving Thee, O my God, as my heart desires to love Thee, I should wish this very moment to make an act of love of such force that you should say, 'Behold a soul who loves Me as much as all My angels and all My saints have ever loved Me from the beginning of the world, love Me to-day, and will for ever love Me.' And this act of love I should wish to repeat a hundred times, a thousand times, every moment of my life. If I was but worthy of loving Thee, O my God, as my heart desires to love Thee, I should wish to love Thee more than any possible creatures could by the help of Thy grace be capable of loving Thee. I should wish to love Thee with such intensity that there should not be a single creature in the universe who could by any possibility love Thee more ardently than I loved Thee."

It was in these moments of intimate union with

God that he composed the prayers, which afterwards were transcribed and formed into short treatises, such as the "Enchiridion or Manual of Little Ones," the "Cimiliarchion or Repertory of Devout Prayers" which were sometimes addressed to our Saviour, sometimes to the Blessed Virgin, and all of which bear the marks of his ardent love.

"Are you troubled by a temptation or by any other affliction? If you are, do not say, 'The Lord abandons me, He rejects me, my homage is not pleasing to Him,' the ordinary language of the mistrustful, but, on the contrary, suffer all things with patience, and even with joy, for the sake of Him, Who has Himself called you and chosen you, and believe that He is very near those whose hearts are being tried. If you bear humbly and without murmuring the burthen that is laid upon you, it is impossible to say the weight of glory you are not laying up for yourselves in the life that is to come. It is then that you will be able to say to Him truly: 'I have been as the docile animal who lets himself be led by the hand, therefore shall I abide with Thee for ever'.

"Hearken, my brethren, should your soul be filled with delights, so that lifted above yourselves you were to be raised up even into the third Heaven, there to converse with the angels, yet you would have done

nothing so great as if you had suffered lovingly sorrow and exile of the heart for your God, and been conformed to the Saviour of the world, Who in the midst of the greatest sufferings, fears, and anguish said to His Father, 'Thy will be done,' and hanging to a cross, with His hands and feet pierced, had not whereon to rest His head; Who, in fine, by a prodigy of unheard of love, submitted for your sake with joy to the torments and ignominy of His most bitter passion.

"Wait, then, when you are overwhelmed with desolations and trials, in silence and with a holy longanimity till it shall please the Most High to dispose of you otherwise.

"And, truly, on the last day you will not be asked if you have tasted much sweetness here below, but whether you have been faithful to the love and service of your God."[1]

Louis de Blois, as I have already mentioned, was particularly devout to St. Gertrude; he took pleasure in following her exercises, and frequently used the following prayer—so well translated by Dom Guéranger.[2]

"Enlighten my intelligence with the light of Thy

[1] *Guide Spirituel.* From De Lamennais' translation.

[2] *Exercises of St. Gertrude.* Translated from the Latin by Dom Guéranger.

love. Absorb my spirit into Thine so powerfully and so absolutely that I may be utterly buried in Thee; that I may lose all sight of myself in this union, and that Thy love may alone know the place of my rest; that love may seal up this blessed tomb, and may fasten me to Thee therein by a tie which nothing can ever break asunder. In this—love's sepulchre—envelop me with Thy precious Redemption as with a winding-sheet, embalm me with the rich perfumes of Thy death; place me in Thy divine Heart, pierced by the lance, as in a monument of the most precious marble. May Thy glance full of sweetness envelop and protect me, and may I thus remain under Thy care for all eternity. It is then, O my Well-beloved, that I shall feel myself delightfully absorbed in the sweetest shadow of Thy paternal love; there may I repose in the never-ending remembrance of Thy loving-kindness."

Louis de Blois also constantly encouraged his brethren to meditate on and follow the "Exercises of St. Ignatius," which at this time excited great admiration through the whole of Germany, his sons having but lately brought that most useful and generous help to the aid of Belgium, which they have since never ceased to render it.

The introduction of the new Company into Bel-

gium was not achieved without much difficulty. In vain does one search for the cause of this hostility, which, born with the Order, threatened it with exclusion from all cities and governments.

In Belgium this enmity admits of an easy explanation, since it was under Spanish rule, and since Mary of Austria was accustomed to take counsel of Charles V.

This monarch, notwithstanding his tender affection for Francis Borgia, an affection which he manifested for the Duke of Candia even after his entrance into religion, did not greatly care for the Institute of St. Ignatius. He was on very bad terms with the Pope, Paul IV., founder of the Theatines, whose Rule and Observance bore some resemblance to that of the Jesuits, and who might have sought to create some reaction in Italy against Spanish ascendency there, on which account he may have feared the influence of the new religious in Spain and the Low Countries.

He did not conceal his antipathies from St. Francis Borgia, when the latter visited him at the Castle of Jarandilla before his arrival at Saint-Just (Yuste): "I do not wish to hide from you," he said to him, "that your determination caused me great surprise, when you wrote word of it to me at Augsburg from Rome. It seems to me that a person

like yourself would have done better to choose an ancient Order, one of those which have been tried and proved by a long course of years, rather than an Order which has not yet met with sanction, and of which people speak so differently."

"Gracious Majesty," answered the Father, "there is no religious Order, however ancient or approved, which was not once new and unknown. I know that people hold different opinions about the Society, as your Majesty tells me, but that is because they do not know the truth concerning it. For my part, I can assure your Majesty, with that truth which I am impelled by so many reasons to speak in your presence, that if I had known any evil thing of this Company, I should never have put my foot into it, and that if, now that I belong to it, I learnt anything of the sort, I should that instant leave it. It would not be just or fitting that, having made the sacrifice, as I have done, of vanities which the world esteems, it should have been in order to enter a Religious Society in which our Saviour, Jesus Christ, should not be glorified and served."

The Emperor, who had no respect or attachment for any but ancient establishments, answered him with true Castilian obstinacy. "I believe what you tell me, because you are a man of your word. But what answer would you make to those who object

against your Company, that all its members are young, and that there is not a grey head to be seen amongst them?" "Sire," replied Francis, "when the mother is young, how would your Majesty expect to find the children old? If this be a crime, it is one of which time will soon cure us; in twenty years from now, those who are young amongst us will have many a grey hair."

This conversation, given us by Mignet, on Fr. Ribadeneira's authority, is curious, as it proves how much the Emperor's judgment was led away by prejudices upon the subject of this Society, which, starting in Spain, was recruited from its very outset from amongst the greatest families and the most distinguished officers of its time, and which was to give incomparable lustre to that country, in the person of its Doctors, Apostles, and Martyrs.

We have reason to believe that, when it was question of the Jesuits in the council-chamber of the Queen of Hungary, without the generous intervention of the Abbot of Liessies, Spanish ascendency would have triumphed, and they might have been refused the rights of citizenship.

"The Fathers of the Company of Jesus," say the Bollandists, "who read this life, will know what they owe to Louis de Blois, and who were at that time their most zealous protectors; and the Benedictines

will learn from the enlightened charity of the Abbot of Liessies to defend, extol, and point to the Jesuits as valiant fellow-soldiers; finally, men will see what clearness of vision God gives to pure and upright souls, when he inspired Louis to take up the defence of a Society, which had then nothing but its holy beginnings to recommend it." [1]

The Jesuits first set foot on Belgian soil in 1542, at the same time that Martin Bossemius was unsuccessfully laying siege to Antwerp and Louvain. Their intention was to establish themselves in the latter town, but the siege being prolonged, they were obliged to remain for some time in Brussels. They, finally, took possession of a College at Louvain, where they attracted a large number of scholars, when an accusation before Vigilius Zuichenus, the President of the Privy Council, gave Louis de Blois an occasion of bearing witness in their behalf. I do not know what date to assign to this letter, quoted by the Bollandists; Monsignor de Ram and Dr. Leglay are of opinion that it was written about the year 1559, but it clearly proves that the Com-

[1] A letter may be read in the Appendix addressed by Louis de Blois to St. Ignatius, begging him to send religious of his Order to the Netherlands. St. Ignatius esteemed the Abbot of Liessies very highly, and he imposed upon the Master of Novices, in the statutes of the Society, the obligation of reading the works of Louis de Blois, and causing them to be read by his disciples.—Vide App. Note V.

pany had been at that time for some years settled at Louvain: "My Lord, when I had the honour lately of dining with you, the conversation turned upon the Jesuits, and a long discussion ensued. I should have wished to have spoken to you on the subject in private, and to have given you my candid opinion about this Society; not having found a convenient opportunity of doing so, I have decided upon addressing myself to you in writing.

"I am very intimately acquainted with Fr. Adrian, Prefect of the College of the Society at Louvain, and with several others of the Fathers. This Fr. Adrian is a true servant of God.

"This Company, notwithstanding all that has been said against it, has in my opinion been raised up by God for the salvation of a great number of souls. God is working great things by means of it in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and in the Indies. The Apostolic Nuncio, when I went to visit him at Halle, gave it the highest praise, showed the utmost esteem for its members, and recommended me to cultivate friendship with them. In fine, the good they have done at Louvain, though they have been there but a short time, is well known; Ruard, the Chancellor, a man of great prudence, and full of religion and faith, could give the highest testimony in their favour. Notwithstanding this, there are ignorant or spiteful

people who would find subjects of accusation against them in their most praiseworthy actions. But establishments of this kind have always caused great jealousy at their outset; St. Dominic and St. Francis have gone through these same troubles.

"Wise and prudent men will, notwithstanding, approve of a rule, which does not permit of its Religious making their solemn Profession till after seven years' novice-ship, a measure which obviates many inconveniences. As to the privileges granted to it by our Sovereign Pontiff, they are such as the nature of their vocation absolutely requires. Though these privileges are greater than those permitted to other orders by their ancient constitutions, they are not destructive to the peace of the Catholic Church, nor opposed to regular discipline. Already have two Popes, after mature deliberation, confirmed this Company; many Christian Princes have also, from its very beginning, treated it with the highest regard.

"Since men who, by their talents or dignities, occupy such high positions have signified their approval, he, who would pretend that they understood nothing about this grave matter, would appear to me to be guilty of great folly.

"Would to God that in our Belgium, as in all other provinces of the Christian world, some of their col-

leges were to be seen! I feel certain that the cause of Faith, and the salvation of souls would gain by it. But I fear lest God may not think us worthy of such a benefit. But should it happen that they brought their case before the Emperor or the Queen Regent, I feel convinced, my Lord, that you would be doing an action very pleasing to God by supporting it. He who hearkens to the dictates of his conscience would never oppose like institutions, with the risk of fighting against God whilst imagining he was fighting for Him.

"The Divine counsels cannot compare with human wisdom, exceeding, as they do, all the limits of reason.

"Accept graciously and favourably of these lines, my Lord, which I have but one motive in addressing to you—love of God and of God's glory.

"I pray God to preserve your days in length and happiness. Brussels. From your humble servant, Louis de Blois."

Louis had at once understood, and perfectly summed up in his letter, the part which the Jesuits had been called upon to take in the world. He had descried, afar off, that halo of glory which, at this moment, encircles that body, more invincible than the Spanish battalions, spoken of by Bossuet,

a body which, "placed in an hour of danger to stem a torrent, was to preserve to the Church one-half at least of her possessions". [1]

[1] Montalembert.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOUIS DE BLOIS PUBLISHES OTHER WORKS—THE MSS. EXHORTATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE RELIGIOUS OF LIESSIES AND PRESERVED BY THEM, AND GIVEN US BY THE BOLLANDISTS.

THE Monastery of Liessies had now reached the state so ardently desired by Louis de Blois. The new rule bore fruit, and the monks, closely united to their head, enjoyed fully the advantage of his talents and virtues. Not a year passed without giving birth, so to speak, to a new treatise. After the "Mirror for Monks," which had produced so great an effect, came the "Rule of Spiritual Life," of which certain portions are undoubtedly in every way equal to the first of his works. The preamble, which unites the merit of extreme tenderness with that of true elegance, shows forth the infinite mercy of God—

"Fear the Lord, and love Him. Carefully watch over your soul, and let it be your one care to preserve its purity. Be always on your guard so as not to offend God by sin, and, if you have committed sin, do not aggravate your offence by doubting of forgiveness. Never give up hope, should your sins even be innumerable. Have you fallen under temp-

tation? Arise, go to the Physician of your souls, Who will open the bowels of His mercy towards you. Have you fallen a second time? Raise yourselves up again, implore your Redeemer, by your tears and your supplications, to receive you. Have you fallen a third time, a fourth time, and yet oftener? Arise again, weep, sigh, humble yourselves, and your God will never abandon you. Never has He despised, never will He despise a contrite heart. Never has He rejected, never will He reject those who take refuge in Him, in a truly repentant spirit. If you do not cease from rising from sin, so neither will He ever cease from receiving you. Should you have fallen a hundred times, yea, a thousand times, in the space of an hour, raise yourselves evermore with the hope of obtaining pardon, and thank God for not having permitted your fault to be heavier, or your return less prompt."[1]

It was in these terms that Louis de Blois unfolded, to his religious and to the world, that unspeakable mercy, of which, in spite of the eloquence of orators,

[1] "He composed books," says Fr. Binet, "which, full of celestial manna, delighted hearts and soothed away the afflictions of life. When he speaks, the heart speaks, and his words are torrents, as it were, of sweetness. . . . If sweetness were to write books, it would borrow the pen of Louis de Blois. His writings were heavenly sparks (allumettes de Paradis) which lit the fire of devotion in the hearts of all his brethren."—*Vita Ludov. Blosii*, by Fr. Stephen Binet, p. 294. Antwerp, 1634.

the depth and science of theologians, man, with the help of reason alone, has never been able to measure the abyss. In presence of the dangers menaced by the new heresy, his pen could not long remain idle; accordingly he composed the "Collyrium Hereticorum".

"Touched with pity," he says, in his short preface, "at the sight of these heretics who attack us, I have written this little treatise. I have not sought to give it elegance of phrase or perfect unity, but I have simply collected together all the remedies at hand to restore the sight of these poor sufferers. I shall be satisfied if my efforts are successful in bringing back some who have allowed themselves to be led into error, or in preventing others who are in danger from falling into it. The praises of men, indeed, concern me little, what I look for is the salvation of souls."

He divides his treatise into seventeen chapters, in which he satisfactorily disposes of all the Protestant objections, as may be seen from the following extract regarding devotion to the Saints:—

"The devil, knowing that devotion to the Saints is very pleasing to God, and of great advantage to the faithful, wishes to do away with it by the hand of heretics. If honours rendered to Saints are not pleasing to God, the psalmist would not joyfully

sing: 'But to me Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable.'[1]

"God Himself honours His Saints, since Jesus Christ says: 'If any man minister to me, him will my Father honour'.[2] Why then should we refuse to venerate those whom God in heaven honours? To pay homage to the Saints is to praise God, Who is the principle of all perfection. We do not honour God and the Saints in the same manner, as to the latter we do not give, as we do to the Creator, the worship of latria.

"He who has a devotion to the Saints, who piously and humbly invokes them, must of necessity reap great benefit from so doing. We should not doubt, therefore, that the Saints, who are already in the enjoyment of celestial bliss, give assistance to those who do honour to them. For if the Saints, whilst on their pilgrimage here below, had power to assist others by their prayers, so much stronger are the reasons for believing that they are able to do the same now, when, united to God in glory, they have thus become possessed of a more perfect charity and a more extensive power."

He collected these treatises into one volume, which he published in 1549, with the following Introduction:—"In our youth we translated a little

[1] Ps. cxxxviii. 17. [2] St. John xii. 26.

book of St. John Chrysostom from Greek into Latin, 'The King and the Monk Compared'. Since then we have written 'The Rule of Spiritual Life,'[1] 'The Treasury of Prayer,' 'The Enchiridion Parvulorum,' 'The Psychagogia,' which was taken from the works of St. Augustine and St. Gregory; and, finally, 'The Collyrium Hereticorum'. May these works, though imperfect and without beauty, turn to the glory of God. We submit them without reservation to the judgment of the Church and the correction of her Doctors."

Here again we observe, that there is nowhere question of "The Mirror for Monks," and that evidently Louis still left the glory of having written it to the famous Dacryanus, the apocryphal Religious of the eighth century.

Other publications succeeded each other at short intervals.[2] In 1551 appeared the "Institutio Spiritu-

[1] His *Rule of Spiritual Life* he dedicated to Francis Quignonez, Cardinal of Santa Croce. Francis de Quignonez, who belonged to an illustrious Spanish family, was General of the Order of Grey Friars, then Councillor to Charles V., before being elevated to the rank of Cardinal. When Clement VII. fell into the hands of the Emperor's troops in 1527, Quignonez was employed by him to negotiate for peace, and to obtain his liberty. A breviary of his, afterwards suppressed by St. Pius V., has come down to us.

[2] We have here followed nearly the order marked out for us by the Bollandists, who have sacrificed chronology occasionally, in order to place the principal events of their Saint's life and his character in juxtaposition.

alis," from which we have already quoted passages, in which the principles of the highest mystical theology are summed up. "The ascetical soul," says the author, "should accustom herself, by a holy attention of mind, to refer all her actions to the glory of God; as also to unite her deeds as well as her sufferings, by her prayers or her desires, to the sorrows and actions of Our Lord. In this manner, these sufferings, and these actions, which of themselves are vile, miserable, and imperfect, will become infinitely great, illustrious, and pleasing in the sight of God, for they will receive ineffable dignity from the merits of Jesus Christ, to which they will be united. It is the drop of water which, thrown into a cup filled with wine, becomes absorbed in the wine, and takes the taste and colour thereof. If, therefore, before performing an action, this soul, not satisfied by an interior intention by which it gave itself to God alone, felt a desire to express this intention in words, it might thus address itself to God the Father:—'Holy Father, I consecrate to You myself and all my actions, in union with Your only and well-beloved Son, and I beg of You to be pleased to accept all that I do for the eternal glory of Your Name, and for the salvation of all mankind.'

"This soul, then, having accomplished her actions or exercises, should, in order to perfect and complete

them, present them to the holy and compassionate Heart of Jesus. 'Oh! good Jesus,' should it say, 'I confide to Thy Heart these exercises which I have performed. I offer these to Thee for the eternal glory of Thy Name, and for the good of the entire Church, in union with the tender love by which Thou, all God as Thou art, wert pleased to become man and to suffer death for us on the Cross.'"[1]

He concluded the "Institutio Spiritualis," with passages from the works of Taulerus, and pious prayers were addressed to Our Lord, and others to the Blessed Virgin, the Saints, and the Angels.

The "Consolatio pusillanimium" appeared in 1555. Louis de Blois has here borrowed materials from many Teachers of the Church, from St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Gertrude, the B. Henry Suso, to find motives of encouragement for timid souls, and thus to give them by means of these masters of eloquence some idea of the goodness of God. Here again he plunges, heart and soul, into his subject, and I know of nothing more touching than this soliloquy of Jesus Christ with the soul who trembles at leaving the earth.

"What more then do you fear, My daughter? Why do you not desire death? What harm can it

[1] *Un rayon de miel*, trans. by M. l'Abbé Roze.

result in for your soul? After death you will no longer offend Me, your soul will no longer be tarnished by sin. If you are attached to nothing in this world, death can rob you of nothing. Are you attached to anything in it? Take care! you are loving danger for its own sake. Before death, then, abandon the love of things that pass away, and you will fear it the less. I will go farther—if in this life I am your only love, rejoice at seeing the approach of death, as death alone will put you in possession of the Object of your desires. Well do I see the reason of your fears. You may not be too much attached to worldly things, you may have no regret for what you have to leave behind, but you are uncertain as to what you have got to expect; you are not sure whether you are worthy of love or of hatred—of My reception of you, or whether you will meet with peace or chastisement. You do well to be in ignorance of it, My daughter, it is even for your good that you should know nothing of what is to befall you. But, notwithstanding your fears, remain firm in your hope. Of yourself you know not how to live well, as of yourself you would not know how to die well; you owe both the one and the other to the effects of My grace.

"Since you receive from Me the grace of living well,

why should I not add to it that of dying well? Since all you have you hold from Me, as from Me you expect all things, why hope for the one, and despair of the other? Have confidence, then, throw all your care on Me, put aside every fear and disquietude. If unaided, you can never resist temptation nor avoid danger through life, you will not be more able to do so at the hour of your death; if in life I sustain you, if in temptation I stand by you faithfully, on your death-bed I shall succour you no less. Go not into battle, My daughter, armed with your own weapons, take confidence in Me, rest upon Me, I will fight for you. Neither do you fear the uncertainty of that much dreaded moment. No kind of death can affect the happiness of the just man, for, however unexpected his end, he shall find himself in peace."[1]

The same year, 1555, saw the appearance of the "Margaritum Spirituale," which comprises passages from Taulerus and Rusbrock on the Incarnation, an "Abridgement of the Life of Our Lord," an "Explanation of the Passion," drawn from Taulerus's works; pious meditations on the Life of Our Lord, and a pamphlet entitled "The furnace of divine

[1] *Consolatio pusillanimium*, p. iii., Cologne edition of 1615. In this L. de Blois has borrowed much from John Lanspergius, a Carthusian, who died at Cologne in 1539, and whose ascetical works had some celebrity.

love," formed of prayers and aspirations borrowed from the Psalms.

This "Margaritum Spirituale" is worthy of its name, and the "Commentary on the Passion," from Taulerus, deserves to be recommended to all readers, who will find in it the most spiritual views united to the truest unction. Obliged to limit our quotations, we shall be satisfied with giving this fragment on the Holy Eucharist, which is due entirely to the pen of Louis de Blois.

"O adorable Mystery! O divine Sacrament! All you who love God, come and give yourselves up to transports of love! God has instituted in our midst a prodigy so astounding, that the powers and intelligence of man become confounded in trying to fathom it. If some one, favoured by the grace of God, should attempt with the miserable resources which nature gives us to sound its depths, his heart, inflamed with love, would melt like wax before the ardour of this divine furnace. The All-Powerful, in the Holy Eucharist, has lavished upon us His Divinity united to His Humanity, in order that we may receive Him within us. How is it that your hearts are not transported with fervour at the sight of the unspeakable love, and of the desire which consumes the All-powerful King of Glory for such miserable creatures as ourselves—who are but dust

and ashes? For this most tender Father knew not what to invent that would be better than this. He has given us Himself, in order to give us proofs of His most generous bounty and ardent love.

"To give oneself up is a great act of generosity, but to give oneself up as He has done is an act of generosity without limit.

"He has given Himself to us as Father, as Brother, as Friend; He is become our Food, our Ransom, our Intercessor, and our Advocate; in fine, one day He will be our eternal Recompense, and on that day He will satiate our souls with His Substance, and will Himself be the fulfilment of all our desires. What then is the power of this God, Who, under the appearance of a little piece of bread, has been able to give His Divinity in its entirety, His precious Body, His most Blessed Soul to all mankind for their Food? O salutary nourishment, which transforms the children of men into children of God! O Bread in every way desirable, O sacred Bread, worthy of all adoration, which nourishes the soul, fortifies the heart of man, and fills the mind with joy! This is the sweet Bread, the celestial Manna, which contains in itself all spiritual delights, and is sweeter than honey! What more can one say? Do we not receive in this Sacrament, whose value we can never appreciate, all that we can think of or desire? Does one not receive

Jesus Christ in it, verily the Son of God, true God, and true Man, for ever living in the unity of the Father and of the Holy Ghost? Finally, does not the soul, which has been worthily prepared, receive all the virtues practised by Jesus Christ, all the merits acquired by Him in His Life and Passion?

"Let us hasten then to purify, as much as we are able, our hearts from sin, and seek to adorn them with virtues, so that we may be ever ready to receive for the greater glory of our most generous Creator this food of salvation which He has given us."[1]

[1] *Margaritum spirituale*—from M. l'Abbé Roze's translation. Is not this very same thought, that of confidence and self-devotion—one which in our own days has found expression in these exquisite lines? "'Be not afraid, for in this Sacrament I have hidden My might; be not afraid, for in it I have deposited My blessings and My favours; fear not the infirmities of your flesh, for there is My sacred Flesh which will heal the miseries of yours; be not afraid of your past sins, because there you will draw water and blood, which, springing up from My heart, will purify you from them.' I hear these consoling words of Thine with joy, O my God, and I hesitate no longer in answering to Thine appeal for confidence. Yes, when I approach Thy Tabernacle, and I hear Thee say to me there: 'It is I,' I adore, but I fear no longer. I humble myself profoundly, and yet I fear not, I behold the enemies of my soul and remain calm and silent, I despise them, and I have no fear of them: I resign myself to the world's tempests, and to the sorrows of life. I feel a sweet confidence, which renders the avoidance of vice and the practise of virtue easier to me, and I say to myself, that if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a blind confidence in the God of the Eucharist is its perfection and its consummation."—*Méditations sur l'Eucharistie.*—Mgr. de la Bouillerie.

What charm is there not to be found in these various passages? Are we not conscious, in reading them, of a soul, an intelligence, fed at the fountain-head of true contemplation, and perpetually directed towards the study of the Holy Scriptures and the liturgy?

Thus we have no hesitation in repeating after Dom Guéranger, that "He, who will give himself up to the leadership of a Saint of the old school; will not have to repent of lost time, and if he runs the chance of meeting with less philosophy and less psychology on his road, he has the likelihood of being fascinated by the simplicity and authority of the language, and of being astounded, and then humbled by a feeling of the contrast which exists between the sanctity of his guide and himself".

Louis de Blois, owing, as he did, the word of life to his flock, neglected no opportunity of instructing them in doctrine, and in knowledge of the Rule. According to the testimony of the Bollandists, he spoke frequently to them, and they lament that these verbal instructions have not been preserved by his sons.

On the other hand, they give us three manuscript exhortations, which, long preserved in the archives of Liessies, were communicated to them at the time of the publication of Louis de Blois's life. We have

given the first in our opening chapters, the second, which treats upon the duties and obligations imposed upon all Religious, is preceded by the following prologue.

"When some one comes to us to be enrolled in these pious ranks, and to receive the monastic habit,[1]

[1] It will not be without interest, perhaps, for the reader to compare with this advice the Chapter LVIII. of the Rule of St. Benedict, "Of the manner of receiving Brothers to Religion.—Let not an easy entrance be granted to one who cometh newly to religious life, but as the Apostle saith: 'Try the Spirits if they be of God'. If, therefore, the new-comer persevere knocking, and continue for four or five days patiently to endure both the injuries offered to him, and the difficulty made about his entrance, and persist in his petition, leave to enter shall then be granted him, and he shall be in the Guest Hall for a few days. Afterwards he shall be in the Novitiate, where he shall meditate, and eat, and sleep.

"Let a Senior, who has the address of winning souls to God, be appointed to watch over him narrowly and carefully, to discover whether he truly seeks God, and is eager for the Work of God, for obedience and for humiliation. Let all the rigour and austerity by which we tend towards God be laid before him. And if he promise stability and perseverance, at the end of two months let the whole Rule be read to him, with the addition of these words:— 'Behold the law under which thou desirest to fight; if thou canst observe it, enter in! if thou canst not, freely depart.' If he shall still persevere, let him then be brought back to the aforesaid cell of the Novices, and be again tried in all patience. After the lapse of six months, let the Rule be read to him again, that he may know unto what he has come. If he still perseveres after four months, let the same Rule be read to him once more. If he shall then promise, after due deliberation, to keep and observe all things commanded him, let him be received into the community, knowing that he is from that time forward under the law of the Rule, so that he can neither leave the

let him, though he be old, well-instructed, noble, high in worldly dignity, be given the following preliminary discourse to read, before being clothed in holy habit.

"Most dear Brother, if you desire to enter into our Society, and to serve Jesus Christ with us in this monastery, you must, above all things, fulfil this command of our Lord. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.'[1]

"If you are prepared to give up all for God, and to renounce yourself in earnest; if you are ready to abandon entirely your own will, and to destroy your passions; if you are ready courageously to repel the luxuries and allurements of the world, to trample pride under foot, and to practise humility, if you are ready to endure outrages, injuries, temptations, sufferings of body and mind for the

monastery nor shake off the yoke of the Rule, which, after so long a deliberation, he might have accepted or refused. And when they admit him to profession, he shall in the presence of all make a promise, before God and his Saints, of stability, amendment of manners, and obedience, in order that if at any time he shall act contrariwise he may know that he shall be condemned by Him whom he mocketh. He shall draw up the form of this promise in name of the Saints, whose relics are on the Altar, and of the Abbot there present. With his own hand shall he write it, or if he knoweth not how, another at his request shall write it for him, and the Novice shall put his mark to it, and lay it with his own hand upon the Altar."

[1] St. Luke ix. 23.

love of Jesus Christ, you may enter into religion, confiding in the infinite mercy of God; but if you are not inclined to make this entire renunciation, it would be useless for you to enter into religion.

"In a monastery your time is at the disposal of others, and in all things you must give proof of perfect obedience. If you are told to do anything, in accordance with the precepts of monastic life you will have to execute the order without murmuring. When you are desirous of repose, you will perhaps be overwhelmed with work; when you have prepared yourself to do great things, you will perhaps be set to do the most insignificant. And you will never be able to say: 'In this I am willing to obey, but not in the other'. You will have to perform in all simplicity whatever you are commanded in reason, and as long as it is not contrary to our holy profession.

"In the contradiction of your desires and of your will, you will have to endure much anguish, and frequent difficulties; the devil, the flesh, and bad men will often provoke you to murmur, but you will have to persevere with patience in your holy resolution, and to repel their wicked suggestions. You will no longer be allowed to seek comfort in relaxation, for, renouncing the vanities of this world, the broad path led by seculars, you will have to walk

henceforward on the narrow and thorny path of penance. You will frequently have to deprive yourself of many things, to fast often, to maintain perpetual continence, to apply yourself to prayer, meditation, and spiritual reading, to observe silence, to abstain completely from all intercourse with worldly men, rarely to leave your monastery, to possess nothing of you own, to be ever seeking to acquire purity of heart, to assist night and day without intermission, in spite of heat or cold, at divine office ; in fine, faithfully to set yourself to acquire whatever beseems your religious profession, and prudently to reject whatever is contrary to its spirit. And if, abandoning the fear of the Lord, you give yourself up to a life of negligence, distressing your superiors and brethren by your pride, your murmurs, and your resistance, know that your punishment will be severe.

" Be not, however, cast down by these difficulties, mistrust your own strength, and place all your confidence in God. He it is Who strengthens the weak and gives succour to the fallen ; He it is Who smoothes our paths and softens our afflictions. By His grace He renders easy and pleasant that which would otherwise seem impossible for man to accomplish. Is it not He Who has said : ' Come to me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh

you? Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burthen light.'[1] The entrance of the path to heaven is often narrow, tedious, and difficult, but when divine love and charity have filled the heart of man, it is with unspeakable joy that he runs in the way of the commandments of God. To Him be honour and glory for all eternity."

The third exhortation was particularly dear to the religious of Liessies, they called it the "paternal exhortation," because it was often made a subject of lecture to the community. It certainly deserves to hold the first rank amongst Louis de Blois's writings:

"Beloved sons, who have assumed the habit of our holy profession, who have bowed to the sweet yoke of Christ, I warn you and exhort you in the bowels of Jesus Christ, to have always before you the hour of your vocation, and to fly and despise the vanities of this life. Behold the universe, see how it grows and withers away, how nothing in it is lasting or endures, how it perishes with its desires, and is scattered as dust before the wind. Weigh well the value of this present life—this vapour of a moment. Consider that 'all flesh is grass, and all

[1] St. Matt. Chap. xi. 2-8-9, 30.

the glory thereof as the flower of the field,'[1] which in a short time fades and is seen no more. Think of these things, and, raising up your hearts high above them, leave these earthly possessions for those which are eternal.

"Learn, my sons, the full extent of your good fortune. God has chosen you for His inheritance; He has snatched you from the perils of the age; He has guided you into a most tranquil harbour, to a most delightful paradise, to this monastery; He has allowed you to live day and night in His presence, in angelic purity, ready to see His face in the joys of paradise. No, the Lord has not granted this favour to all nations, He has not been so bountiful to all.

"Be then grateful to so kind a Master, serve with a chaste heart this loving Spouse of your souls. Think of the Saints who have gone before you, call to mind their contempt of the world, their ardent longing to join the ranks of the holy army. And you, my sons, friends of God, co-heirs of Jesus Christ, who have been born again to a new spiritual life, who have chosen the 'better part,' I conjure you, march forward, without stopping, on the footsteps of the 'Lamb without spot,'—never neglect the love of your Saviour. Let Him be the sweetness of

[1] Isaias xl. 6.

your souls, the consolation of your pilgrimage, the recompense of your labours; entertain Him with a pure heart, sigh after Him night and day, seek Him in your studies, in the oratory, in the garden, in your cell, wherever your footsteps lead you, till the hour when the shadows lengthen, till the moment when the day declines, till the term of this miserable life, till the threshold of eternal splendours. Let this monastery be to you as a pleasant sepulchre until the day when, risen to a new life, you shall appear with Christ in all His glory. Let it be actual pain and anguish to you to abandon even for an instant the peace of this holy spot, the fond embrace which unites your soul to Jesus. In the solitude of the cloister you possess Jesus, you lose Him amidst the noise and tumult of the world. Fly then the tumults of the world and its company, and dwell in the joy of Christ and His blessed Mother, so as one day to attain to the glory which is prepared for Their faithful servants. Place all your happiness in serving God, in spiritual reading, in prayer, and in meditation. Rejoice in having been chosen to serve the Eternal King.

"Be zealous at divine office, assist at it in a loving spirit. Pronounce and sing devoutly, attentively, and with all possible respect, the sacred texts inspired by the Holy Ghost, believe firmly that there

is nothing in it but what is of use to you, provided your mind is vigilant, your intention good, your affections pure.

"Love spiritual progress, and carefully avoid whatever might be an obstacle to it. Again I warn you, sons of light, 'refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul';[1] abstain from much wine, despise the bitter pleasures of the world. Walk in holy Observance, not as fools, but as wise men learned in the will of God. Preserve, as closely as you are able, this mild and easy rule in all its integrity. Let peace reign amongst you and union of heart; be charitable, unless you wish to transform the abode of angels into a haunt of demons. Let hatred have no place among you, nor suspicion, nor envy, so that all may declare the triumph of peace and love in the house of God. Support one another mutually, assist each other in all things. Let the young respect and honour the old; let the old return their affection, and by word and example encourage them to the strict observance of discipline; let each one study to mortify his own will, and learn to yield it with interior joy to the will of his Superiors; let him promptly execute, without rejoinder, the orders he receives from them. Fly pride and arrogance, the abyss of vainglory;

1 Peter ii. 11.

love to be ignored by all but God. Seek rather to be inferior than superior, disciple rather than master, for this is the will of God and your sanctification.

"Be ready to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and invite the Holy Ghost to come and abide in you.

"Finally, be not troubled, and, if at times you should be tried by weariness of heart and aridity, if you should have to endure temptations and anguish, do not suffer yourselves to be cast down, but remain firm, and march fervently onwards through these passing sorrows towards the joys of an eternal beatitude. Yet a little while, and sorrow will be no more; yet a little while, and you shall be wrapt in glory and repose. Then 'you shall see and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb.'[1]

"Then shall the Lord console you as a mother consoles her children, and you shall wipe away your tears in the true Jerusalem. Then will your heart expand with joy and admiration when you behold the splendour of the holy city, when you contemplate face to face the God of gods in Sion, when you possess what the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. Grant to

[1] Isaias xlvi. 14.

us to witness these mysteries, dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest for ever and ever."[1]

[1] Acta SS. Jan., Vol. I.

CHAPTER IX.

ENLARGEMENT OF THE MONASTERY OF LIESSIES—LOUIS DE BLOIS MAKES A PLAN OF THE MONASTERY—UPON THE SUBJECT OF TEMPORALITIES—THE LIBRARY—THE RELICS.

" HE valley, where formerly stood the Abbey of Liessies, is little known and rarely visited; still it is full of picturesque spots, and each step awakens pious and interesting memories. The Helpe, a deep and narrow stream, hidden under a curtain of willows, divides it in its winding course. The pools and grassy flats form vast basins of water and verdure; the cottages in the village, two or three country houses, and the belfry of the church are half hidden by the luxurious foliage of the scattered trees. The small terraced fields, covered with their meagre crops, stretch along the lower slopes of the hills, broken here and there by masses of naked rock. The steep sides of the mountains, which everywhere close in the horizon, are clothed with dense forests, the home of the graceful roe-deer, and the sturdy, acorn-fed wild boar. When the summer sun sparkles on the pools, and gilds with its ray the pasture-grounds of nume-

rous herds, bringing out in all their beauty the various shades of foliage and of forest, the traveller, pausing on the heights to contemplate in admiration this valley, smiling in its solitary wildness, names it, as it was named by those who saw it before it was polluted by the footsteps or the hand of man, 'The Valley of Joy, of La Liesse'—Liessies."

From this charming description, which we borrow from the Abbe Dehaisnes, Keeper of the Records of the North of France, we can appreciate the deep feeling possessed by monks for the beauties of the outer world, and everywhere, from the North to the South of France, the situations chosen by them prove this same love of nature, of which they have left a trace in their descriptions of their monasteries.

Like his predecessors in office, Louis de Blois wished his Religious to cultivate manual labour, as a relaxation after their more sedentary occupations. He, therefore, sought to give the gardens of Liessies such suitability of purpose, as would serve to render them agreeable and attractive to the brethren. Accordingly he had little plots of ground laid out in the neighbourhood of the garden which was common to the Abbey, and which was surrounded by the Helpe, for the benefit of each one of the Religious. There, on the banks of the little streamlet which went to feed the river, and in full view of the

wooded hills, they came to occupy themselves—at one time with the cultivation of flowers, at another with study, or else to practise music or singing. To prevent, however, the use and enjoyment of these private gardens from interfering in any way with regularity of discipline or monastic poverty, he inserted the following observations in his statutes :—"Though we are far from condemning those occupations for the brethren which include the care of flowers or shrubs, yet they should carefully avoid looking upon these flowers or pleasure-grounds as private property." And in order to secure to these retreats that stamp of piety which he wished to see all over his monastery, he had devout sentences, which he himself composed, written upon all the slender palings which divided the little gardens :—"May the beauty of flowers, and of all living creatures, increase our love and our admiration for the Creator." "Let the charms of this garden raise our thoughts to the beauty of Paradise." "This spot has been dedicated not to vanity, but to piety." "Far hence be all that is displeasing to God." "Let us seek heavenly things." "Thou hast enchanted me in Thy work, and I will rejoice in the labour of Thy hands." "The birds of the air praise God, in order that man may praise him from the bottom of his heart."

Besides these private gardens, he surrounded a larger piece of ground with walls, and this he destined for the Abbot's recreation. "Those who come after me," he said, "may not have the same love for the sacred sciences, and they will here find with pleasure a spot, in which mind and body may agreeably repose."

Although the Monastery had been rebuilt on a large scale after the Norman invasion, and although in the thirteenth century, Maurice de Rumigny had erected a country house and hospitium, Louis wished still to enlarge the cloisters, and, above all, to bring the monks under strict enclosure.

He in great measure rebuilt the monks' quarter, and had undertaken an important restoration, when death arrested his projects. The Bollandists affirm that, when his successors wished to carry on his works, and lengthen the church and dormitories, they were unable to find the Abbot de Blois's plans, notwithstanding which they continued what he had begun. After the completion of the buildings, they chanced to find the plans, and they discovered to their joy and satisfaction, that they had in every detail followed out their Father's instructions, and restored Liessies in the manner intended by him.

In the administration of his temporal offices, one sees that Louis de Blois always sought to

derive lasting spiritual advantage from the concerns of this life. "In this world," he says, "we are pilgrims and exiles, why, therefore, attach ourselves to vile things? Why love them inordinately, instead of seeking our celestial country, instead of sighing after eternal goods? If we are to live as Christians, it must be for the future life, not for this present one."[1]

Thus he would never embroil his Abbey without grave reason in lawsuits, being of opinion, that the wrangling and discussions, which they involved, were little suited to the dignity of the monastic character. "As regards the goods and possessions of the Convent," he says, "beware of being too easily led into lawsuits. It is far better to accept of settlement by arbitration, or even to be the first to propose such a mode of coming to an agreement, than thoughtlessly and recklessly to go to law. It is wise at times to endure temporal loss of minor importance by prudently keeping one's peace, and placing one's confidence in God, than to suffer considerable spiritual loss by obstinately contending for the things that pass away. Let us always prefer the soul to the body, Heaven to earth, the works of God to the works that perish."

Thus, notwithstanding great talents for administration, say the Bollandists, he did but little to

[1] *Enchiridion parvulorum*, l. 1.

increase the riches or possessions of the monastery. He professed to believe that economy was a monastery's best revenue. He was economical and attentive to his affairs from love of poverty, but he spared no expense when the glory of God, or the necessities of his sick brethren required it. For abuses which had slipped in, such as presents, sumptuous repasts on the occasion of investitures, professions, dedications, or first masses, he was pitiless, wishing to conform in all things to the spirit of poverty, and to surround these solemn occasions with the recollection which befitted them.[1]

Louis de Blois, who watched so carefully over the souls of his Religious, forbidding them all frivolous reading, was nevertheless an ardent lover of all good and beautiful books. Worthy rival of those Anglo-Saxon Benedictines who gave immense pos-

[1] In the Bull approving of Louis de Blois's Statutes, the Pope expresses himself thus :—"Provide et diligenter a monachis amputandæ sunt occasiones excedendi in potu vini, ne ipsi a Deo et rebus divinis per incautum et superfluum vini potum vel per crapulam elongentur. Vinum quod eis administratur, tali mensurâ semper administrandum est, ut utilitati corporis et profectui spirituali serviat ; non autem spiritum extinguat aut internam libertatem et gratiam præpediat. Non debent procurare nec etiam temere, vel nimis facile admitti convivia excessive sumptuosa et irreligiosa, propter alicujus professionem vel primitias id est primam missam, nec pro eo quod aliquis qui diu vixit in religione, forte desiderat celebrare jubileum. Bull of Pope Paul III., 1545, Art. 24.—Archives of Lisle, fonds de Liessies.

sessions in exchange for one single precious manuscript, he did not shrink from considerable sacrifices in order to collect books connected with the history of the Church, the Monastic Orders, and above all the Acts of the Martyrs, for the benefit of his monasteries.

Many years before his time, Wedric, an Abbot of the 12th century, who afterwards passed from Liessies to another Abbey, no less richly provided in manuscripts, that of Saint-Waast in Arras, had collected a large number of books at great expense, and had also procured writers, chanters, and men remarkable for their virtue and learning, from all parts of Hainault. He had sent learned monks to the neighbouring monasteries, such as Marchiennes, and Anchin at Douay, to copy the Acts of the Martyrs, and legends of the lives of Saints.[1]

Little by little, Liessies had, by the sixteenth century, provided itself with all the works necessary for the prosecution of the monastic studies. Louis de Blois, therefore, devoted all his erudition and

[1] Ut fratres arctiori charitatis vinculo adstringeret, bibliothecam librorum numerositate divitem comparavit. Profecto extitit scriba doctus in regno militantis ecclesiæ, sciens nova et vetera, proferre omnipotenti a se rationem fidei. Quare pietatis studium augere desiderans, adscivit sibi scriptores, cantores, virosque probitate claros quos tunc Hannonia genetrix alebat.—*Chronicon Loctiense*, Ed. Reiffemberg, p. 417.

energy to the study of the Authors of the Acts of the Martyrs, whose triumphant narratives he preferred to all others.

Though honouring with all loving care the relics of the Saints, he would have readily agreed with Radbert in saying: "Would it not be disgraceful, whilst treasuring the bones of Saints in gilt shrines, studded with precious stones, to treat their lives and actions with contempt and disgust?"[1]

United in friendship with the Carthusian, Laurence Servius, Louis had received from him the Lives of his favourite authors, of Taulerus, Rusbrock, Henry Suso, Helding of Melburg, Florence of Haarlem, and his constant communication with the learned of his times had brought to light the various manuscripts possessed by his convent.

These riches, which were soon after to attract the children of St. Ignatius, and to furnish them with the first materials for their gigantic labours upon the Lives of the Saints, were to meet with little mercy from revolutionary Vandalism, and in 1791 this rich library, which had been brought together by ten generations of patient workers, was carried off to Avesnes. Condorcet having demanded, on the 19th of June, 1792, of the National Assembly,

[1] Radbert quoted by Dom. Pitra. Prolog. *ad Acta SS. Ruffini et Valerii.*

that all title-deeds, then existing in France in different depositories, should be burnt, by care of the local authorities, and the Assembly having ratified this project worthy of the barbaric ages, the archives and title-deeds of Liessies were despatched to Metz, there to be used for making wadding and cartridges.

To one, who had the embellishment of his monastery so much at heart, the care of the Church and of holy things could not fail to be of deep interest. "Accordingly, he has left so many tokens of his zeal for God's service, that one is forced to own that he had the words of the Prophet King engraved on his heart, even more than upon his walls:—'I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth.'[1] It is this beauty, this majesty of the house of God which finds its expression in the ceremonies, so wisely ordained, of Mass and the Divine Office, when carried out with gravity and devotion; in those Gregorian chants, sung with spirit, slowly, and with emphasis, and where the pauses are so managed as to permit of the distinct articulation of the words; and, indeed, in all the Divine Office, as a whole, when becomingly celebrated. It is to the zeal of Louis de Blois," add the Bollandists, "that the pious solemnity of

[1] Ps. xxv. 8.

worship which has always been maintained by his successors is due." [1]

Having succeeded in giving greater pomp and fulness to the performance of the ceremonies of the Church, the Abbot, being desirous to enrich the sanctuary, caused the erection of a vast choir. This he ornamented with a high-altar in white marble, designed, say his historians, after the graceful style of architecture introduced by Vitruvius, and upon which was represented, in artistically grouped colonnades, exquisitely sculptured, the mysteries of the Passion, and Death of our Lord.

That this choir and altar produced a fine effect, I am very far from doubting, since the Bollandists, who were archæologists as well as learned men, certify it, but I own that if the 13th century had, through the hand of Maurice de Rumigny (whom we have already mentioned), left its graceful mark on the conventual Church,[2] one may be allowed to

[1] Acta SS. Jan. Vol. I.

[2] In the beginning of the thirteenth century, Lidde de Laon, a relation of the Countess Ada, the wife of Thierry, the first Count d'Avesnes, came to live in the house built and inhabited by Ada, near the Abbey of Liessies, and presented the church with "fine glass paintings (peinctures sur verre)," says the chronicler, "and other rich ornaments." Later on, Jean Baccart, the same who refused, in so dignified a manner, to surrender his office to the Duke of Burgundy's chaplain, and who was a great lover of the fine arts, enriched his church with magnificent paintings, some of which are still in existence in the present church at Liessies.

regret that Louis de Blois should not have carried out his restorations in the same style. But probably he was led away by the general feeling of the day, and gave the preference to the decorated Italian architecture, which was prevalent throughout France at this time, over those marvellous buildings of the middle ages, which, by their grand and vigorous proportions, fill the true lover of religious art with admiration, whilst they defy by their solidity the injuries of time.

The Abbey of Liessies was very rich in relics.

In addition to the venerated remains of S. Hiltrude, which attracted great numbers of pilgrims desirous of praying at her magnificent shrine, of which later on we shall give a description, Gontard, Wibert, and Ada repose near the same spot. The memory of the glories of its foundation had been handed down from centuries, and excited the fervour of the crowd which pressed around these tombs.

During ten centuries, pilgrims and sick people have come to see the woods in which the saint concealed herself, the hermitage, now turned into a chapel, where she lived, and the fountain whence she drew water. In the midst of the Reign of Terror, in those ill-fated days when to pray was a crime, the faithful came in secret to implore her help, and at the present moment, though sacrilegious

devastations have saddened this abode of peace, the devotion to St. Hiltrude has regained all its pristine splendour.

In the year 1208, during the prelacy of Hugh de Hestrud, Dom Thomas de Walcourt, who was to succeed him later on, brought some precious relics from Constantinople, which had been given to him by Henry, Emperor of the West, son of Baldwin, the Magnanimous, Count of Flanders, and of Hainault, and by Theodore, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Besides these, Liessies possessed other relics of note—of St. Lambert, St. Gery, and of several other Saints, so that it came to be a saying in Belgium, that relics stayed nowhere more willingly than at Liessies.[1]

Louis first built a fine chapel, which Anthony de Winghe afterwards replaced by a still more ambitious edifice, in which the remains of these Saints could be deposited in all security. He had them placed in fitting order, encased in gold and silver shrines, ornamented with pearls and precious stones, and he composed a complete historical account of each one of his reliquaries, which he wrote out with his own hand on parchment. "One discovers," say the Bollandists, "among Louis de Blois's papers

[1] "Les saints estoient bien aises de voir leurs âmes en paradis qui est le séjour de liesse éternelle, et leurs corps dans la chapelle de Liessies qui estoit un petit paradis terrestre."—The P. Binet, p. 294.

many notes upon the authenticity of these relics, and we give one amongst them which concerns those remains which were brought over from Constantinople, and which is curious for more reasons than one: 'People ask themselves how it is possible for us to have received the remains of the Prophets from Constantinople, when they have almost all of them been buried in Judea? But this astonishment will cease, if people would but weigh well these words of St. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, spoken at the commencement of a homily on the Prophet Elias: "Formerly," says this holy Bishop, "the Jewish people prided itself upon the possession of its prophets, and Judea was, as it were, the special field of their operations; but in our days the Church has deprived her of this glorious title, and the very bodies of the prophets are now in our possession. For it would not be fitting that a barren people should still have the prophets to cultivate it; it would not be just that they should keep the prophets who crucified the God preached by those prophets." 'Again,' adds Louis de Blois, 'some have difficulty in believing that we possess the authentic relics of St. John the Baptist, and pretend that they were completely destroyed by the Pagans. If they had read history attentively, they would have seen that, at the very

time when the Gentiles were burning the relics, the Christians had secured and carried off the greater part of them. Accordingly we read in the twenty-eighth chapter of the eleventh book of Rufinus in the 'Ecclesiastical History' that, 'In the time of Julian's reign, all restraint seems to have been cast aside, and that the cruelty of the Pagans found vent in every kind of excess. It happened, in a town of Palestine of the name of Sebaste, that they made a raid upon the tomb of St. John the Baptist, dispersed his remains, then gathered them together to burn them, and, finally, scattered these precious ashes to the four winds, having first mixed them up with dust. But Providence permitted that some natives of Jerusalem, belonging to the monastery of a holy man of the name of Philip, should happen to come at that very time to the sepulchre to pray. Seeing this crime about to be committed they preferred to expose their own lives rather than allow it to be accomplished; they mixed, therefore, with the crowd who were collecting the remains in order to burn them, and gathering the precious relics together with all respect, they were able to save them from the hands of these impious men, and bring them back to their father, Philip.'"

Louis de Blois's possession of the precious relics of Liessies was disputed, not indeed by those who

would profane them, but by the inhabitants of Dompierre, who were jealous of surrendering a deposit, the possession of which conferred distinction upon their town.

A nobleman, of the name of Guillaume, an inhabitant of Dompierre, had in the year 1162, with the approbation of Nicholas, Bishop of Cambray, presented the Abbey of Liessies with the body of St. Etton, an Irish Bishop and Confessor. For many years these remains had been deposited in a priory affiliated to Liessies, close to Dompierre, and served by monks. The relics of the Saint were here preserved in two caskets, the removal of one of which to Mons was rendered necessary, in consequence of the frequency of wars with France. The Pope having ordered the recall of these scattered religious to their communities, on account of the want of discipline of monks thus left to themselves, Louis de Blois, unwilling to leave the treasure unhonoured, gave orders that it should be brought to Liessies.

Great was the sensation at Dompierre, whose inhabitants already nourished such rancour against the monks of Liessies as to have put to death one of the Religious of the priory, and great the complaints of the Dompierre "*Manants*" to Philip de Croy, the Duke of Arschot and Lord of Avesnes.

The latter interfered, in his character of lord of the domain, and drew down a sharp rejoinder on his head from Louis de Blois, whose cousin and friend he was, in which the Abbot of Liessies maintained his right with the greatest dignity, and gave the best of reasons to the Duke. One of these letters ends thus: "Would it, I pray you, my Lord, be reasonable and proper that, on account of the difficulties made by the people of Dompierre, everything which the Pope and your uncle, the Bishop, had with calm deliberation ordained, and which has now with much solemnity been carried out, should be abolished, and that we should have to restore the body of St. Etton into their hands, seeing that it never had been under their charge? I cannot believe, my Lord, that you could entertain such an opinion. The Suffragan still has the document in his hands which Monsignor de Cambray wrote, touching the translation. I have sent to him, and have given orders that if it is found, the said writings should be copied, and the authentic copy taken to your lordship to be shown to you with other papers. I beg that all these papers may be returned to me by the bearer.

"My Lord, I have been several times compelled to write letters to you, at great length, about this affair, and am very sorry to give you so much annoyance, and to write so much about things so clear

and manifest. My reasons are well understood by many learned and virtuous persons. I trust that you, my Lord, will in the end also understand them, and not wish to do anything contrary to equity, nor be displeased if, for the honour of God, we keep foremost in our desires and deliberations how we may best defend our rights, and enjoy the favour we have received from the Holy Apostolic See. I pray God, my Lord, at all times to keep you under His holy protection, and most humbly recommend myself to your good favour."[1]

Although "Messieurs les Manants," who perhaps did not feel for the Saint the devotion one might have expected from them, but who feared to see their taverns deserted, as is pointedly remarked by Louis de Blois, sent deputations to the Archbishop of Cambray; and although Philip de Croy threatened Louis de Blois with law, the Abbot carried his point, and with the permission of Paul IV. effected the solemn translation to Liessies on the 25th of July, 1556, in the midst of a great assemblage of the faithful. With the authorisation of the Most Reverend Martin Cuyper, Archbishop of Chalcédoine, and Suffragan of Cambray, he enclosed the head—set apart from the rest of the body—in a shrine of its

[1] Letter from Louis de Blois to the Duke d'Arschot from the Lille Archives.

own, and deposited it at Mons, in the oratory of the house which was dependent on Liessies.

The inedited correspondence between Louis de Blois and Philip de Croy on the subject still exists. It is extremely interesting, both on account of the question of canonical right therein treated by the Abbot of Liessies with his usual erudition, and for the tone of calm and virtuous dignity which he maintains throughout.[1]

Those who are acquainted with the history of Touraine are aware that this controversy is of comparative insignificance beside the terrible dispute which the disappearance and abduction of the relics of St. Martin gave rise to, and even in our times, sceptical though they may appear to be, pious altercations of a like kind have sprung up which at least are worth more than indifference and neglect.

[1] In 1790 the relics of St. Etton were still at Liessies. The inhabitants of Dompierre, hearing that the Abbey was menaced with pillage, went in a mass, armed with pitch-forks and sticks, to the Abbey, carried off the relics of St. Etton, and brought them back to Dompierre, where they are preserved with the greatest veneration to this day.—*Note by the Abbé Dehaisnes.*

CHAPTER X.

CHARLES V. RAISES THE SIEGE OF METZ—THE WAR OF 1533—NOBLE-MINDEDNESS OF LOUIS DE BLOIS—HIS BROTHER ADRIAN—PHILIP DE BLOIS—THE ABBOT'S GENEROSITY TOWARDS THE POOR—FRANCES DE BLOIS.

HE year 1552 terminated unfavourably for the Emperor. After four months of an obstinate siege, with severe cold, terrible epidemics, and an indefatigable adversary to contend with, he had to yield to the entreaties of his generals, who conjured him to save the rest of his army by a hasty retreat; and, accordingly, he decided on the 26th of December to raise the siege of Metz.

The Duke of Guise, perceiving the intention of the Imperialists, had taken instant measures to harass them in their movements. The retreat of the Emperor's army was made in such disorder, that it was possible to attack him without risk, and to inflict heavy loss upon his forces. But no sooner had the French penetrated into the camp of the Imperialists, and found it encumbered with sick, wounded, and dying, than their ardour was changed into compas-

sion. The Duke, who was as generous towards misfortune as he was daring in action, sent food to these unfortunate soldiers who were dying of hunger, and ordered his surgeons to take charge of the wounded. This act of humanity fitly crowned the reputation which the Duke de Guise had so well merited in the glorious defence of Metz, and which he was to maintain until that fatal day when, beneath the walls of Orleans, an insidious bullet was to deprive France and the Catholic party of the greatest of the sons of the House of Lorraine. The Emperor in his illness had been forced to give up the direction of the siege to the Duke of Alva, and scarcely made his appearance at all in the trenches. His spirits were much affected by this reverse. He realized that the progress of his designs was arrested, and, alluding to the age of his more fortunate adversary, he said: "Fortune is a woman: she bestows her favours upon youth, and disdains grey hairs".

This year, 1552, was fatal to him. The Siennese had revolted against Mendoza his ambassador, and placed themselves under the protection of France; the Turks, led by a skilful pupil of Barbarossa's, had devastated the coasts of Sicily: and the aged Emperor, tormented by gout, and embittered by reverses, had but one desire—to be avenged in a

signal manner upon the French, hatred of whom was his predominant passion.

The garrisons of Thérouanne and Hesdin, which were placed upon the frontiers, gave great annoyance to the Imperialists, and spread terror among the population of Flanders. Henry II., proud of his successes, and forgetting Francis the First's saying, that Thérouanne was one of the pillows on which a King of France might sleep in peace, had neglected to strengthen the fortifications, and limited his efforts to placing some of the young and impetuous nobility in it as garrison. To moderate their ardour, and also because his mind misgave him as to Charles the Fifth's projects, he had despatched a courier to the aged D'Essé, who was living at his country seat of Epanvilliers, to order him to take command of the place.

D'Essé, though laid up with jaundice, did not need to be told twice, and made answer to the King in the charming and witty letter preserved for us by Brantôme, "in which he assures his Majesty, that my Lady Jaundice, shall not get the better of him".[1]

The Emperor had given orders to advance, and the neighbouring troops were assembled in order to

[1] Où il assure sa Majesté que Madame la Jaunisse n'aura pas raison de lui.—Brantôme.

besiege Thérouanne. Five companies of foot soldiers, who were quartered in the vicinity of Valenciennes, and who spread terror over the surrounding districts by their insubordination and their exactions, mutinied, calling at the same time for pay.

The Count de Lalaing came to the rescue, punished the most guilty, and appeased the rest with the sum of 4000 florins. He gave the command of the regiment to Adrian de Blois, brother of the Abbot of Liessies, with orders to march to the camp before Thérouanne.

They started on the 23rd of April, but they had not gone far when mutiny again broke out in the ranks, and Adrian de Blois was obliged to have recourse to the severest measures, to reduce these refractory soldiers to submission.

What part did he play at the taking of Thérouanne? The Belgian archives are silent on this point. We only know through Brantôme, that D'Essé, at the moment of the final assault, despairing of his position and not wishing, as he says in his vigorous language, to die of the jaundice, stood up in the breach, and loudly defied the leaders on the Imperialist side. "Come on," he cried, "Ensign or Captain; I am the French General." He found the leader of the enemy to be his own equal in courage, and saw, while receiving his own death-

wound, the dead body of the Spanish general fall at his side.[1]

During this time, other relations of the Abbot of Liessies were also serving the cause in person:

[1] Andrè de Montalembert, Lord of Essé and Epanvilliers, to which family the Count Charles de Montalembert belonged, was celebrated for his chivalrous courage at the Court of Francis I. Francis I. used to say, "We are four gentlemen from La Guyenne, who ride a tilt against all comers in France: I, Sansac, D'Essé, and la Châteigneraye". He gave signal proof of his services by the defence of Landrecies, in 1543, against the Emperor's entire forces. Francis I. recompensed him for his valour with the post of First Gentleman of the Chamber, which caused the Courtiers to say, that he was more fit to give a midnight thrashing to the enemy than a shirt to the King. (Une camisade à l'ennemi qu' une chemise au Roi.) Henry II. conferred the badge of his Order upon him. D'Essé had been for three years living upon his estates, and wasting away with jaundice, when the King gave him orders to start for Thérouanne. "If Thérouanne is taken," he said to the King in taking leave of him, "D'Essé will be dead, and consequently cured of his jaundice." We know that he kept his word, and was killed on the breach, the 12th of June, 1553, at the very moment when the Marshal's staff was about to crown his glorious career. Brantôme has drawn a vivid portrait of him amongst the greatest captains of his day.

The House of Montalembert bears: "Neither hope nor fear" (Ne espoir ne peur) for its motto, and we know that Andrè de Montalembert was not the last of this noble race who practised it well. Witness Charles de Montalembert. "My only weapon," he says at the end of his *Introduction to the Monks of the West*, "is but a cold and melancholy pen, and I am the first of my race who has fought with a pen. But at least let it serve with honour; let it become in its turn a sword in the fierce and holy warfare of conscience, truth, and the disarmed majesty of right, against the triumphant oppression of falsehood and evil."

Baldwin de Blois, Lord of Trèlon, made a reconnaissance, on the 14th of April of the same year, up to the very walls of Thérouanne, and Philip de Blois held the town of Binche. "On the 20th of July, the French appeared before Binche. This little town was but scantily supplied, and had for its entire garrison only two companies, commanded by Philip de Blois. This brave captain, however, none the less proudly disregarded the summons of Henry II.—who commanded the army in person—to surrender, and a lively cannonade greeted the enemy. But, by next day, thirty-seven fieldpieces and twelve cannons were put into position, near a windmill on the side of the hospital, and directed against the right of the gate that led to Brussels. This powerful artillery destroyed part of the ramparts of the little town, and the garrison, incapable of sustaining an assault, surrendered at discretion. After the inhabitants and the soldiers had been driven forth unarmed, and the officers and the wealthiest of the citizens had freed themselves by paying ransom, the town was given up to pillage, and then razed to the ground, together with a magnificent palace belonging to Queen Mary."[1] On his side Philibert Emmanuel of Savoy, Prince of Piedmont, who was destined later on to rank among

[1] Lettres des Seigneurs.—*Belgian Archives*, Vol. VI., fol. 21.

the greatest commanders of his day, besieged Hesdin, occupied the town, and took the garrison prisoners. The Monastery of Liessies, meanwhile, suffered considerably from the constant foreign invasions. As the House of Blois, now become very powerful in Hainault, on account of the important posts held by its members and the strong castles garrisoned by it, protected the Monastery of Liessies, its enemies lost no opportunity of avenging on the vassals of the Abbey and even on the Monks the annoyances which the Imperialists had inflicted on themselves. It was thus that, in 1552, the King of France, having taken Trèlon by assault, put to the sword the garrison, which was composed, say the memoirs of the times, of brigands who infested the country. These so-called brigands were the soldiers of the De Blois, to whom this name was given on account of their frequent incursions into France.

In 1554, Constable Montmorency, having lost a relation at the siege of Trèlon, his soldiery in revenge laid waste the country, pillaged Liessies, and broke open the gates of the Monastery. In the midst of these calamities which interfered gravely with the progress of his reforms, Louis de Blois maintained the most perfect serenity of mind. "In all these troubles he repeated with confidence: 'He

who puts his whole trust in God shall dwell under the protection of the Most High'. Nothing could shake his constancy, cloud his brow, or destroy his peace of mind." [1]

Yet, notwithstanding his courage, and accustomed as he was to speak of the Cloister as lists wherein the Religious defied the spiritual enemy, he blamed severely the passionate violence of the combatants in these wars, and their frequent and terrible reprisals. With Job, he said: "'The life of man upon earth is a warfare,' but victory is not always where we expect to find it. We must learn how to appreciate events at their just value, and never forget that the only true and irreparable misfortune is the loss of souls."

Thus, on one occasion, when Adrian de Blois, furious with French exactions, had driven the enemy across the frontier and reaped a signal advantage over them, in doing which he had given proof of the greatest valour, the Monks and inhabitants of Liessies came to congratulate Louis upon his brother's triumph. Far from giving way to any signs of rejoicing on being told of his success, the Abbot burst into tears: "No, no," he cried, "a truly Christian heart could not rejoice at so much Christian and French blood being shed; this pass-

[1] The Bollandists.

ing triumph may have been purchased at the cost of everlasting death to many souls!"

It is impossible not to admire a saying, in which the feelings of this refined nature are so strikingly manifested. He has endured the sorrows of invasion, he has had to leave his monastery, to abandon his sons and his precious treasure of relics; and, when a repulse is inflicted on the enemy who disturbed his peace, he neither thinks of the honour nor of the success of his kindred, one thought only occupies his mind, blood has flowed, Christian and French blood; and, with the remembrance of the early cradle of his race before him, mingled with that of the souls who have been summoned before the Sovereign Judge, he can only weep and pray for those that are no more. It was thus, with the same care for souls and the same loving compassion, that, nine centuries earlier, died the Northumbrian hero, the great and warm-hearted Oswald, whose touching history has been told to us by Montalembert. When he perished at Maserfeld, in his terrible onslaught upon Paganism, his last thought and words were for the eternal salvation of his people. "My God," he cried, seeing himself surrounded by enemies, overwhelmed by numbers, and already pierced by countless darts and arrows, "my God, save their souls."

Not satisfied with prayer alone, Louis de Blois knew how to practise the temporal, as well as the spiritual form of alms. Economical himself, his generosity towards the poor was boundless; faithful to the traditions of St. Benedict, he manifested his charity towards all who made calls upon it.

It must be admitted, that this task of the Religious Orders has been fulfilled by them with a devotion which is only equalled by the ingratitude with which it has been repaid. "To the wants of that multitude who are condemned to labour and privation, and who constitute the immense majority of the human race—the poor—the Monks have ever ministered, giving them salutary and untiring sympathy as well as bread. What tender care, what deep consideration, what ingenious precautions have been devised and practised, for twelve centuries past, in these houses of prayer, amongst whose dignitaries are numbered the infirmarians of the poor! . . . The Monks, having on their own part given all they had to give, have never ceased to inspire miracles of generosity in all those who loved and came across them, thus confirming by their actions the definition which has been laid down by a Council regarding monastic goods, that, 'They are the offerings of the faithful, the patrimony of the poor, and the ransom of souls.'"

Louis, who looked upon the resources of which

he had the disposal in this light, gave the following advice to his successors: "Let men consecrated to God avoid that terrible passion for hoarding up money, which has destroyed the discipline of great numbers of houses. Let no sordid parsimony, which is opposed to christian liberality, reign among you; but let alms be given with generosity, according to the resources of the monastery, as what is over and above belongs less to us than to the poor."[1]

And what he wrote, he practised. Charles V. had made him a present of a cup in precious metal, exquisitely wrought. No sooner had he received it, than he gave it to the Church of Chimay, which

[1] Liessies, to which the name of the Refuge of the Poor was justly given, had ever been remarkable for the abundance of its alms. At the time of the famine of 1789, the Abbey gave much corn, and 25,000 francs, to be distributed among the poor. About the year 1709, during a famine which lasted many years, the monastery gave food and help to the village of Liessies, Ramousies, and other districts, harbouring the populations, and employing them in the construction of roads, and other useful works (see note by A. Lebeau in his poem on Liessies). One is tempted to inquire how it was possible for the Abbey to practise such liberality, for, in an account given of the state of benefices in 1743, Liessies had an income of only 23,000 livres, and, in the volume regarding Liessies (in the Lille Archives), we read that, in 1755, Dom Mark l'Homme owed 20,000 livres of rent to the Military School, 3,600 to Mgr. de Prunière, Bishop of Grasse, 3000 to Mgr. Sauveur, Bishop of Bazas, 1500 to the Bishop of Rennes, Mgr. Girac. In 1776, Dom Verdier gave an annuity of 24,000 livres to Charlotte de Lorraine, who was co-adjutrix to Remiremont."

had just suffered great losses in the war, in the belief that he would be more pleasing to God by coming to the assistance of his neighbour, than by keeping this souvenir of the great monarch.

But there is another personage, though a humble one, who must not be excluded from this narrative, as, notwithstanding the silence of the historian, she occupied a foremost place in Louis de Blois's heart.

Thus, in all times, do we find near God's servants, and associated in their devotion and their work, the influence of holy women. A chaste and fervent communion of prayers and sacrifice has for ever joined together in history the names of St. Augustine and St. Monica, of St. Scholastica and St. Benedict, of Hiltrude and Gontard, and more recently those of St. Francis of Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal.

It was thus that Louis de Blois was united in prayer and mortification to his sister Frances. For some time Canoness at Moustier on the Sambre, Frances, wishing to be yet more completely separated from the world, came to her brother to be taught the rules of that life which leads to perfection.

We have all, doubtless, remarked how brief and few the traditions are respecting St. Scholastica,

notwithstanding the fact that she played a considerable part in the monastic life of the first ages of the Western Church; and there is but one action of her life known to us—one, however, which could never be forgotten, and that is the one related by St. Gregory the Great in his Dialogues. St. Augustine's love for his mother has preserved the noble character of St. Monica from oblivion, but, in comparison with the few holy and illustrious women whose memory has survived until our times, how many of that fertile branch of the great monastic family are there, whose names, lost to posterity, are inscribed on the book of life alone! "They murmur not at being forgotten, it is their vocation and their desire. They have made many another sacrifice besides that of a place in man's memory."[1]

The Bollandists have made but a short mention of Frances de Blois. "She received permission," they say, "to live at Liessies, and there, occupied with God alone, under the Abbot's direction, she spent her life in a retreat surrounded on all sides by water, and completely separated from the monastery, which served as a refuge in times of war, and a guest-house in times of peace. She lived there in such seclusion that, during the ten

[1] Montalembert, Vol. V., p. 236.—*Monks of the West.*

years she survived her brother, she never put her foot outside this pious refuge, excepting to go every day to pray in the Church of Liessies, and there preserving herself carefully from all distractions of the mind or of the eyes, she occupied a closed tribune which her brother had caused to be made for her, and gave herself up with ardour to the practise of prayer."

This is all we have been able to find out concerning the life of Frances de Blois—a life voluntarily hidden in obscurity. But what matter? She also, like many thousands of other loving souls, "has wished, in the morning of life, to give herself up for ever to an immortal Spouse, and to dedicate to God, in its first freshness, all the treasures of a profound love". What can it signify to one who has received Christ as Spouse, Father, Ransom, and Inheritance, that by man she is forgotten? What pleasures can she regret, when those which she enjoys are of infinite and continual sweetness? "The life of the Church," says the Abbé Gay, "is a perpetual feast; she calls each one of her days a feria, that is, a holiday, a day of rest, a time of rejoicing, from whence it comes that she is ever singing. What other society has done this? What other could have imagined or attempted doing this? Or, finally, what other could succeed in doing this? And, yet, here

are nineteen centuries in which she has never ceased singing, and so she will continue to do till the end of the world."[1]

What pen could describe the union of Jesus Christ with the soul which is confided to Him; the closeness of that bond which unites virgins to God, and the ineffable reward which their sacrifices give birth to? Surely, silence were preferable.

But thus it is that we are constituted; we long neglect the marvellous history of Christian virginity; we jostle heedlessly aside that crowd of devoted and laborious women who have consecrated their lives to the poor and to the young; and yet, if God comes to seek his victims from amongst us, we instantly collect the smallest detail concerning that life of renunciation, we raise up the memories of souls who have peopled the cloisters which separate us from our daughter or our sister, happy at being able to compare these virgins, who defend each day the miserable population of our towns from misery, despair, and hell, with those others who in former times confessed a victorious Christ before the defeated Pagan. It is thus that, having left us, they still carry on a touching ministry towards us, and that, in the places which they left empty, we see drawn up the glorious and imperishable array of that

[1] *De la vie et des vertus Chrétiennes*, by M. l'Abbé Gay.

army wherein they have taken rank, in order to carry help, with their delicate hands, to the most repulsive infirmities, and to open, by their merits, the gates of the eternal Kingdom to abandoned souls.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARLES V. OFFERS LOUIS DE BLOIS THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF CAMBRAY, AND THE ABBEY OF ST. MARTIN OF TOURNAY —HE REFUSES THEM—THE EMPEROR'S ABDICATION.

HE historians of the last two centuries, who have written about Charles V., seem to have understood as little as did his contemporaries the extraordinary act of his abdication.

Some have seen in it the effects of despair, caused by his reverses in Germany; others, the impatient hand of Philip II., desirous of sooner wearing the crown; others have wished to make out that the Emperor was suffering from an attack of his mother's (Jeanne la Folle) terrible malady.[1]

Extending these doubts to the sentiments evinced by Charles V. after his abdication, some pretended that he very soon regretted the enjoyment of power; others, on the contrary, that he became a scrupulous observer of the monastic rule, and fervently embraced all the austerities prescribed by it. This controversy,

[1] "Our Holy Father tells me that as for the Emperor, he is at this moment as one dead, having given up the society of men, and is afflicted, so he is informed, with the same malady as his mother was." (Letter of the Bishop of Angoulême, written from Rome to Henry II., 2nd of June, 1558. Ribier, Vol. II., p. 747.) It was probably Paul IV. who made the above remarks.

in which neither side had any serious proofs to urge regarding a destiny so strange, had come down to our times, when an eminent Belgian archivist brought to light various particulars, relating to the retirement and death of Charles V., from papers and despatches contained in the vast repository at Simancas.[1]

With that delicate penetration which distinguishes him, and assisted by contemporary publications, Mignet has compiled an interesting narrative of the Emperor's abdication, and he appears to have proved, in an unanswerable manner, that the Emperor did not abdicate without having fully considered the step; that he never repented an action which was the fruit of mature deliberation; and that, instead of leading a disconsolate life at Yuste, repining at his own weakness of mind, or a life of mortification, rejecting all communication with the outer world, he was kept informed by his family of, and was consulted by them upon all the delicate

[1] Gachard has successfully proved that the Jeronimite chroniclers, who made a complete romance out of Charles V.'s life at Yuste, were guilty of exaggeration. He also, like Mignet, throws doubt upon the history of his funeral service by anticipation—a custom, which being disapproved of by the Church and even forbidden by her, in a council held at Toulouse in 1327, was one which Charles V., with his love of strict liturgical observance, would never have asked for. He had a service performed for his father's soul some days before his own death, and it was this service no doubt that gave rise to the fable accepted by Robertson, which gains credence even to this day.

questions of the Spanish Empire. Philip II., far from forcing his father to give up the crown to him, seems always to have preserved the most deferential respect for him, and was ever in dread lest that wise monarch should disapprove of his conduct.

As for me, I like to see in Charles V., ever in the midst of all his troubles and woes a devout Catholic, a type of Spain in the 16th century.

Although, surrounded as he was by high and learned dignitaries of the Church and always accessible to monks, Charles V. was certain of receiving trustworthy counsel, his passions were not always under his control, neither did he walk frankly in the paths traced out for him by his conscience. His haughty and jealous temper alienated many princes from him, and raised up many violent enmities against him; but, at the same time, it is impossible to deny, seeing the documentary evidence which has come down to us, that his religious belief was both profound and sincere. And thus, notwithstanding the most singular mixture of good and bad qualities, his life, taken as a whole, bears, even in its very weaknesses, the impress of ardent convictions which he never sacrificed even to political interests.

At thirty-five years of age, in the midst of his glory, whilst in the prime of life, and soon after the fortunate and brilliant expedition to Tunis, the

idea of abdication passed through his sad and wearied brain, it troubled him even in his tender and happy union with Isabella, and after the death of the Empress it took still greater hold of him. Whilst the grand Equerry escorts the scarcely-to-be-recognised remains of his beautiful Sovereign to their last resting-place, in the vaults of the Chapel Royal at Grenada, the Emperor goes to the Convent of la Sysla, there to shut himself up and weep, and when he receives Francis Borgia's confidence on the subject of his religious vocation, he finds consolation for his sorrow in the contemplation of the calm piety of the cloister.

In danger, his unshaken confidence in the force of prayer takes him to the Monks for assistance, and, when a tempest breaks out on the inhospitable coast of Africa, and threatens to destroy his fleet, the recollection of Spanish Monasteries comes back to his memory, as that of Clairvaux did to Philip-Augustus, and gives him hope[1] once more.

[1] After his election at Frankfort, at the moment when he was about to embark, in 1520, at Corunna for the Low Countries and Germany, he had piously visited the Church of St. James of Compostella, the Apostle of the Peninsula, whose patronage had served, for eight centuries, to encourage the old Spanish Christians in th armed revindication of their country, and whose name served as war-cry against the Mahommedan. Before starting for Italy, in 1529, to receive the golden crown of the Empire, he had passed several days at the Convent of St. Engracia, at Saragossa.—Mignet.

Indeed, he ever manifested much affection for Monks, and had a marked preference for the Order of St. Jerome, and for the Benedictines, whose character and works he highly esteemed.

Thus, in his last journey to Belgium, before going to shut himself up at Yuste, the See of Cambray having become vacant through the death of Robert de Croy, he at once proposed that distinguished post for Louis de Blois's acceptance.

The Abbot of Liessies refused to quit his monastery, but directed the Emperor's choice upon Maximilian de Bergher, "a person devoid of all ambition," say the Bollandists, "who was in the habit of playfully reproaching Louis for having passed on a terrible burthen to shoulders too weak to bear it." Charles, supposing that he would not have the same repugnance for an Abbatial charge that he had for the Episcopacy, appointed him to the rich Abbey of St. Martin of Tournay. On hearing this news, Louis de Blois left Liessies and came to Brussels to try and ward off what he considered a real misfortune.

At the very moment when he was asking leave of a Chamberlain to present himself before the Sovereign, a great noble, high in favour at Court, whose name the Bollandists, however, do not mention, but who was under special obligations to Louis, happened to go by. "What a happy occasion," said he, "this

is, Father, which enables me to recognise the services which you have rendered me, and to prove my gratitude to you for them. Will you permit me to speak to the Emperor in your behalf, as no doubt you have some request to make to him?" "Assuredly," answered the Abbot, "and I will confide my difficulties to you. His Majesty has designed to appoint me to the Abbey of Tournay, when I dreamt of nothing better than to live and die at Liessies, in the humble position wherein God has placed me. I have already refused several times His Majesty's favours, and I fear to displease him. Be then so good as to come to my aid, and obtain from the Emperor that I may be left in my little nest at Liessies."[1]

The Prince, astonished at this strange demand, went into Charles the Fifth's presence. "Sire," said he, "I have a very unusual request to present to you. The Abbot of Liessies, Louis de Blois, charges me to implore your Majesty to exempt him from the prelacy of St. Martin, and to leave him for the rest of his life at Liessies."

[1] Charles wished to make him Archbishop of Cambray; Monsieur de Blois excused himself from accepting it, then he was presented to the Abbey of St. Martin of Tournay, but he begged so earnestly that it would please the Emperor to leave him in his little solitude of Liessies, that Charles V. granted him all he asked for—Rev. Fr. Binet, p. 295.

The Emperor, struck with admiration at his perfect detachment, answered: "I will that it should be so. Let Louis de Blois, according to his desire, live and die in the midst of his brethren at Liessies."

Upon this, Louis de Blois, having attracted all hearts at the Emperor's Court through his humility, returned joyfully to Liessies. It is said that the Emperor, who, as stated by the Bollandists, James Froye, and Aubert le Mire, was a constant reader of Louis's works, was much touched by the picture he gave of the tranquil life of the Cloister. After having known all the triumphs and intoxications of Sovereign power, after having for forty years powerfully influenced the destinies of Europe, the Emperor may perhaps have been moved to see appear again at Court the young page, now bright with the radiance of interior joy, whose first appearance in public life he had encouraged, and who now persisted in concealing from the world the holiness of his life and the extent of his erudition.[1]

Henceforth nothing opposed itself to the realisation of the Emperor's wishes. His son had married Queen Mary of England, and by this alliance had

[1] M. Kervin de Lettenhoven says in his *History of Flanders*, Vol. VI., p. 153, that Louis de Blois urged Charles V. to the renunciation of his throne. This is probable, but where has he found proofs of the fact? Moreover, the idea of abdication was, as we have already seen, anything but a sudden one on the part of the Emperor.

consolidated the power of the Empire ; negotiations under happy auspices had been commenced with France ; and if he must regard with anxiety the Pontifical Throne, on which was seated under the name of Paul IV. the energetic Cardinal Caraffa, a furious defender of Italian independence, he could on the other hand contemplate with pride and satisfaction his own noble family whose soul and bond of union he was. Notwithstanding the distrust which was natural to him, the future seemed to be secured, as well by the momentary understanding between his brother Ferdinand and the Infanta, as by the fear already inspired by Philip II. Great indeed would have been his astonishment had any one predicted the unhappy lot of his successors in power, and that a half-century would not elapse without seeing gathered together in the vaults of the Escurial, Philip II., whom he left in the zenith of his power, Don Carlos, who was beginning to display the war-like instincts of his grandfather, and the mysterious child, the object of his tenderest care, who was to be for one day, and one day only, the victorious hero of Lepanto.

On the 22nd of October, 1556, Charles V. prepared the way for his renunciation of the throne by resigning the Grand Mastership of the Order of the Golden Fleece. He assembled together all

the nobles of the Low Countries belonging to the Order, and in their presence conferred on his son the powers of Grand Master. "I hereby install you," said he, "as Chief and Sovereign of the most noble Order of the Golden Fleece; guard it, and maintain it in dignity and honour, as I, your Father, and all my ancestors, have guarded and maintained it. May God give you His grace to do so, and may all success and prosperity attend you." At the same time he solemnly recommended the knights to serve his son faithfully; and his son, to love and honour these knights, who had been his valiant fellow-companions in his wars.

Three days afterwards, according to Mignet, on the 25th of October, Charles V., with much solemnity made his abdication, in the presence of the seventeen provinces, of the members of the Council of State, the Privy Council, the Knights of the Golden Fleece, the Grandees of his court, and the Ambassadors from foreign courts, all of whom were assembled in the vast hall of the palace in Brussels—which was also open to the people. Dressed in mourning robes, and wearing the Collar of the Golden Fleece, the aged Emperor, accompanied by his son, Philip II., his sisters, the Queens of Hungary and France, and his nephews, the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, and the Duke Philibert

Emmanuel of Savoy, advanced with difficulty, leaning with one hand upon a stick, and the other upon the shoulder of William of Nassau, Prince of Orange.

After a statement made by Philibert of Brussels, wherein the causes of his retirement were explained, Charles V. made a speech in which he at once summed up his career, and unfolded to his vassals the policy he wished to see followed by his successors. The fine account written by Mignet, which was drawn from the annals of Pontus Heuterus, who assisted at the ceremony of abdication, and the narrative published by the learned Gachard in the "Analectes Belgiques," deserve an attentive perusal. In the Emperor's address, he again returned to the idea, which he had long entertained, of giving up his throne. "I should have laid down this burthen," he said, "long ago, if my son's youth, and my mother's incapacity had not forced my mind and my heart to bear the weight of it up to the present hour."

His last recommendation was on the subject of the spread of Protestantism, and in justice to the Emperor it must be admitted that he gave as much time and care to Catholic interests as his affairs in Germany permitted, and always caused them to be pre-eminently respected.

"Above all be careful not to let yourselves be

infected by strange sects. Destroy them in the germ the very moment they appear amongst you, for fear lest spreading, they may utterly overthrow the state, and be the cause of your falling into great calamities." Pontus Heuterus relates in a touching manner how the Emperor, turning towards his son, adjured him in eloquent terms always to defend the faith of his ancestors, and to govern his subjects with justice and mildness; then overcome with emotion, tears, and fatigue, he fell back upon his seat. "His speech," says the witness of the scene in conclusion, "touched every one present to the soul; the greater number wept, some sobbed, the Emperor and Queen Mary were much moved, and for myself, my face was bathed in tears." Philip wished to respond, and having kissed his Father's hand—"I should have wished," he said, "to speak well enough in French to have told you with my own lips the sincere affection which I bear to the provinces and people of Belgium. But not being able to do so either in French or in Flemish, I have charged the Bishop of Arras, to whom I have opened my heart, to speak in my place."

"Granvelle," says Mignet, "showed himself the skilful interpreter of the sentiments of Charles Fifth's son, by affirming that they were in all things conformed to his father's recommendations."

One knows, unfortunately, how Philip II. belied the declarations made by him as Infanta, and, however sincere he may have been in his repression of Protestantism, his reputation will never be cleared of those acts of cruelty, which have caused his name and that of the Duke of Alva to be for ever held in execration in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Succeeding to a queen who was noted for her clemency, Mary of Austria, whom no entreaty could prevail upon to retain the government of these provinces, and whose intention it was to devote the rest of her life to prayer, Philip II. would indeed have had to remould his haughty and tyrannical nature, to obtain, as did his aunt, the confidence of a people so deeply attached as they were to the heirs of the House of Burgundy.

Queen Mary's retirement was a heavy blow to Louis de Blois, who was better able than another to value the influence which her firm and charitable rule had upon the spread of Protestantism. But she was not to be shaken in her determination, and said, that after having served for four and twenty years under her brother the Emperor, it would not be fitting that she should recommence service under her nephew the King, and that she was content to serve one God and one Master for the remainder of her life.[1]

[1] Queen Mary's letter to the Emperor.

The Emperor remained some time longer in Belgium, and there received the envoys of Henry II. with the Admiral Coligny at their head, who came to conclude the terms of the Truce of Vaucelles.[1]

He had greatly desired, before finally leaving Belgium, to have seen his brother Ferdinand again, in order to exhort him by word of mouth to preserve the closest alliance between the two branches of the House of Austria. But he was denied this consolation, and he had to embark for Spain without having seen him who was to cause the final separation of the two crowns.

Charles V., having set his house in order, bade farewell for ever to Philip II., and took with him as companions, John de Croy, Count of Rœulx, and Floris de Montmorency, who was, like his brother the Count of Horn, to lose his head on the scaffold. He embarked upon the canal at Ghent, accompanied also by his two sisters, and sailed down to Zealand, where a numerous fleet awaited him, which,

[1] Brantôme has given some curious details upon the subject of this embassy. The Emperor at that time was much troubled with gout, and opened the King of France's letter with difficulty. When he had succeeded, he said to the admiral in a melancholy voice: "What would you say of me? Am I not a brave knight truly to run and break a lance; I, who can only with great difficulty open a letter?"—Ribier, Vol II. It was also in this interview that he prided himself upon the ties which existed between himself and the House of France.

after cruising round the Biscayan coasts, landed the world-wearied monarch in Spain.

From that moment his reputation declined, and what he prophesied was accomplished. The issues of his reign were—to use his own expression—thrown to the winds, and an Italian politician, attributing his conquests, his victories, and his rapid elevation to chance, and, giving his opinion that his retirement was due to discouragement, writes as follows:—"His renunciation of his States, and his residence in a monastery, have been the cause of his losing nearly all his reputation. I say nearly all, since as much, perhaps, remains to him as remains of way on a vessel which, impelled by oars and wind, still makes some progress after the oars have stopped, and the wind has fallen. The conclusion which everyone has come to is, that it was by fortune's favouring wind that the immense fleet of His Majesty's States, kingdoms, and empire has been guided."[1]

Whatever may have been the judgment of his contemporaries upon this action—of which several instances are met with in history, as if God wished to assert, by the deeds of man, the superiority of renunciation over the grandest political designs—one feels convinced, after having read Mignet, that

[1] *Relazione di Federico Badoaro*, quoted by Mignet.

the Emperor did not wait to indulge his dreams of retirement and abdication till after he had been overtaken by adverse fortune, and that this project was neither the result of the flight from Innspruck, nor of the disastrous termination of the siege of Metz, nor of the recollection of past reverses. And yet this austere close of a glorious life, in which good and evil were strangely blended, but in which the good was never stifled by the evil, has nothing strange in it to one acquainted with the profound convictions of the men of the sixteenth century. The most ardent faith predominated with them over all their other interests, and hence the true secret of their greatness.[1]

When the thought of that mysterious and uncertain future which awaits them presents itself to the eyes of men, and, casting a glance upon their own agitated lives, they compare them to those of Monks, whose sole object it is to serve God; why should they not go to seek in the cloister, by one generous immolation of self, the assurance of a holy death?

[1] Thus, the Duke of Guise's one thought, when mortally wounded at Orleans, was for God; there is no trace in his last words of one regret or anxiety. "My son," he said to the Prince of Joinville, "May God give you the grace of becoming a good man." When they wished to keep up his rapidly diminishing strength with food, he said, "Take it away, I have partaken of Heavenly Manna, by which I feel myself so consoled that it almost appears to me that I am already in Paradise".

This is the history of St. Francis Borgia, and that of St. Ignatius, and, in our opinion, it is also that of Charles V.

In the melancholy phases of his life as Sovereign, the thought of the life of monks seems constantly to have crossed his mind; it was in their midst that he sought comfort in his sorrows; why, therefore, in his last days, when the government of his States, placed in vigorous hands, no longer stood in need of his watchful care, should he not go to learn of Spanish Religious the science of true happiness and genuine love?

From the depths of this pious retreat, sheltered from treasons and deceptions, and surrounded by faithful and respectful retainers, he could still give from time to time a word of blame or encouragement to his successors, follow the Spanish armies or his son's negotiations with interest and anxiety, and, in moments of anguish, turn to that Consoler who has imprinted a seal of invincible peace and luminous serenity on monastic solitude, the secret of which will never be discovered outside God.[1]

[1] Where is the Christian soul, however fettered she may be in the bonds of sin, however defiled she may have been by contact with the miseries of this earth, which has not at times sighed after the charm and repose of the religious life, and breathed from afar the perfume which these peaceful and secret refuges, inhabited by virtue and devotion, and consecrated to meditation upon eternity, exhale?

No, I do not believe, any more than Mignet did, in the regrets felt by Charles V. after his renunciation of his throne, and I prefer attaching to his retirement that grave, melancholy, and deliberate character, which left its impress on the whole tenor of this great man's life.

I go still further; if in troubled times the Prince, who was so inferior to his Father, had come to beseech of him to share with him the burthen of his government, and to take back, if only for a moment, the Sceptre, perhaps, for the interests and good of Spain, he would have made this sacrifice; but, then, my belief is that the aged Emperor would have said with the minister, torn by Charlemagne from the cloister: "Farewell, beloved cell, never shall I hear again those birds who were wont to sing matins with us, and celebrate God's glory after their fashion, nor those instructions in tender and holy wisdom, which rose up, with the praises of the Most High, from hearts that were as peaceful as their lips! Beloved cell, I shall ever mourn and

Who has not dreamed of a future, when for one day, at least, he could say with the prophet: "Sedebit solitarius et tacebit"? Who has not understood that some spots, at least, should be kept sacred from the world, where man, apart from the revolutions, agitations, and cupidities of ordinary life, could unite his voice in thanksgiving and adoration with the many voices of nature and all created choirs, in blessing and venerating his Creator?—*Montalembert.*

regret thee; but thus it is, that all passes and changes, that night succeeds day, winter summer, the storm comes after the calm, and worn out old age succeeds to ardent youth. Miserable creatures that we are, why do we love this world which passeth away? It is Thy doing, O Lord, Thou whom alone we should love; Thy love it is which should fill all our hearts, Thou, our glory, our life, and our salvation." [1]

[1] *Alcuin*, quoted by Montalembert.

CHAPTER XII.

LOUIS DE BLOIS'S SWEETNESS OF CHARACTER—HIS CHASTITY—HIS LOVE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—HIS ZEAL AGAINST PROTESTANTISM.

"EVEN as oil, the softest of all liquids, floats on the surface of other liquids, so sweetness and peace were diffused over all the other virtues of Louis de Blois."

Thus speaks his historian, whilst representing him, in his actions and writings, as the most perfect model of calm charity and unfailing gentleness. It was by this benign spirit that he was animated when drawing up his code of statutes, and when he prevailed upon the Monks of Liessies to accept his rule. It is in this spirit that he invites the readers of his works to enter tranquilly into themselves, to assist joyfully at the offices of the Church, at prayer, at chanting, and at meditation, and, above all, to act with the most perfect charity towards their neighbour.

"Consider," he says in the "Speculum Spirituale," "the dignity of those creatures whose souls are made after the most noble image of God, and who are

called to a celestial beatitude. Let this consideration serve you to honour and love them. When you see a deformed or diseased man, you should not show less charity towards him on account of his deformity ; you should not dwell upon the state to which a corrupt and mortal flesh has reduced him ; but look beyond to the beauty of an immortal soul. Such is the beauty of a soul which has not been stained by sin, that if you could only behold its splendour you would be unable to contain yourself, so profound would be your joy and admiration.

"Never show too severe a countenance towards others, nor a hard or bitter spirit ; but let your kindliness and affection testify to all, that your heart is tender, beneficent, favourable to all, and ready to do every one a service. Is there any one who stands in need of you? Be prompt in giving him assistance. But it is above all towards those who hate and persecute you that you should show friendliness,—of heart, countenance, and words. Conform yourself to the advice of Our Lord : 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.'[1] Nourish an ardent thirst for the salvation of all, and let the loss of one single rational soul, which, on account of the image of God reflected in it, is

[1] St. Matt., v. 44.

of greater excellence, and should be valued at a higher price than all this visible world, be looked upon by you as a personal misfortune. We are all members of one body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head."[1]

He was never heard to reprove any one bitterly for a fault. When he had to utter a reprimand, he often used this form—"Dom N. has done what he liked, he will have to suffer what he does not like." If the servants of the monastery did not act according to his wishes, he spoke to them with the air of one giving advice rather than blame. "Could you not," he used to say, "do this with greater modesty, or could not such an easy thing be done with greater promptitude?"

His feelings never betrayed themselves by a haughty word, he was never seen with an angry countenance, or using passionate gesticulations. Every one had access to him, and he never turned away a Religious in sorrow, without having offered him help and consolation.

If any one, in manifesting his troubles, showed ill-humour or impatience, he used to say—"Will you, my brother, be so good as to retire till you have mastered yourself, and when your emotion has passed away come back to me. Because it would

[1] *Speculum Spirituale.* Cap. III.

be useless for you to seek for means to re-enter into peace, without your having recovered somewhat of your tranquillity, and thus my advice to you would be completely thrown away."

He meditated for some time before-hand upon what he was going to say or to do, considering that a resolution hastily made often leads to dangers. In coming to important decisions he never trusted to himself alone, but took counsel of Religious of experience. At the time when Antony de Winghe had his life written, they still preserved at Liessies directions drawn up in his own hand, which gave ample token of his deep wisdom and meditative spirit.

His charity displayed itself again in the gracious manner in which he dispensed hospitality, thus conforming himself to the spirit of St. Benedict, who said: "All unexpected guests should be received as Christ Himself, as he Himself will one day say to us: I have asked hospitality of you, and you have received me."[1] He showed himself joyous, and at the same time modest, courteous, and yet grave, liberal, and still sober. If the conversation turned upon an undesirable subject, he lead it so skilfully away that the very people who might have been offended did not even notice it. His virtues

[1] *Regula S. P. Benedicti.* Ch. VIII.

had nothing harsh or dry in them, and no one realised better the saying of St. Francis of Assisium: "Courtesy is the sister of Charity". A true child of St. Benedict, it never occurred to him that the number of guests could be burthensome to the house, and he looked upon the arrival of visitors as a blessing from God. It happened even that, on one occasion when the Abbey had not for some time opened its doors to any one, Louis de Blois had recourse to one of the servants of the monastery, whom on account of his honesty he took especial pleasure in conversing with: "What can this mean, Anselm?" said he, "Has God forgotten us, or is He displeased with us that He no longer comes to visit us in the person of guests?"

Thus, the Abbot of Liessies' cordial reception clung to the memory of all who had been witnesses of it, and Tilman Bredenbach, whom we have before had occasion to quote, wrote the following lines at the heading of a manual of prayers, twelve years after Louis's death: "Dom Louis was of a nature which might almost be called angelic, and his charity to all the world was admirable. You were in the habit of remarking upon it, Brother Theodoric, after having passed several days in familiar intercourse with the Abbot of Liessies, and you used to say, that you had never seen a man of

greater gravity of demeanour than the venerable Dom Peter Homphens, the former Dean of Emmerick, or more mild than the Reverend Dom Louis de Blois. Would to God that there were many Superiors of Monasteries and Heads of Colleges who resembled him, then should we soon see the Catholic Church regain its former splendour. It is thus only that the sacred perfume of the Holy Ghost, with which Our Lord was anointed, shall flow from Christ upon the beard, that is upon the members who approach nearest to Our Lord by their dignities and authority, and thence descend upon the entire flock. The Apostle would thus see the fulfilment of his desires, and for ten thousand teachers in Jesus Christ we should possess ten thousand fathers. Blessed be God, Who, hearkening to the wishes of His people, still raises up in many parts of the world shining lights, which, burning at the head of His Church, show us the way."

In the midst of the temptations of court-life at Louvain, and, in his frequent communications with the world, Louis de Blois's one thought had been to preserve his chastity, and as one of his historians, in his quaint and simple language, says of him—"Monsieur de Blois guarded the flower of his virginity (la fleur de sa virginité) as a precious treasure, to which he had given two guardian angels, to wit,

silence, and the flight of dangerous occasions." The most admirable evenness of mind and heart were observable in him; his disposition was benignity itself. With this balm he moved the heart of his Religious, and did with them what he liked. His life was a mirror of all virtues. "In the classical system," says the Abbé Gay, "chastity belongs to the grand cardinal virtue of temperance; it forms a distinct domain, as it were, of that vast region of which temperance is the mistress and queen. Of itself, it is a royal habit which causes the soul to hold beneath its sceptre and under complete control every act of the body, whatever they may be, down to the least of its movements. It is, as it were, a powerful ally lending its force to reason, so that, amidst the many subjects which this same reason finds in each one of us, and particularly among our organs which are so easily moved, so undisciplined, and so pre-disposed to rebellion, there should not be so much as one which was not under its orders.

"And when, from being moral and natural, this virtue becomes Christian and supernatural, to say nothing of the fresh vigour it thereby acquires, it is then no longer reason alone that it serves, but faith, that true celestial queen, on whom reason itself is not without its dependence. It is a virtue which is at once austere, vigorous, and manly, jealous

also, and sensitive, and brings with it a plenitude of all delights. . . . When it has been always preserved, it constitutes that holy virginity which is as the pearl without price of the New Dispensation, for it is to it, after love, that we owe Our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence it follows that all the disciples of the divine Master praise, exalt, and cherish it, and that throughout all ages many amongst them have devoted themselves to it in life, and in death. Yes, in death, because like faith, of which, indeed, it is but the exquisite fruit, virginity has its martyrs, and can count them by thousands."[1]

These beautiful lines describe perfectly what may be considered the sentiments of the pious Abbot of Liessies on the subject of his favourite virtue. In order to forearm his brethren against all dangers to which it might be exposed, he sought to instruct them in some of the chief means to which he himself had recourse in order to triumph over temptations.

The first was a rigorous temperance in eating and drinking, without which no virtue could resist its many enemies. Louis de Blois was always conspicuous for his extreme moderation, and his rule contains the severest prohibitions against certain customs, such as sumptuous repasts on the occasion

[1] *De la Vie, et des Vertus Chrétiennes*, by the Abbé Gay. Chap. on Chastity, p. 77.

of Professions, &c., which had gradually slipped in. "I warn you, children of light," he said, "to abstain from carnal desires which war against the soul, to abstain from drinking much wine, to abstain from the bitter pleasures of these times."

He had a profound horror of the provocations to drink, which in those days were so common, and to which the inhabitants of the Belgian Provinces were very apt to yield. On one occasion, at the table of some Prince, a great nobleman present invited him to imitate his example in emptying his wine glass at one draught, and, on Louis declining to do so, threatened to throw his glass at his head. "As you will," said the Abbot, with the like readiness of answer which John Bougler displayed with the Lord of Sablé, "I prefer a stain on my habit to one on my conscience".[1]

The second means of preserving purity, recommended by Louis de Blois, was love of silence and solitude. Thus, he only granted leave for long walks (which he called "Spatiamenta"), at considerable intervals, with the view of refreshing the mind;

[1] In the sixteenth century, the Prior of Solesmes, John Bougler, having had to defend the privileges of his priory against the Seigneur de Sablé, met him one day on the bridge of his town. "Monk," said the irate nobleman, "if I did not fear God, I would throw thee over into the Sarthe." "My Lord," answered Bougler, "if you fear God, I have nothing to fear."

and during such walks he forbade all immoderate laughter, profane singing, and such games as necessitated either taking off, or so arranging the habit as to make it appear ridiculous.

Moreover, not only did he refuse entrance to the cloister to women, but he also prohibited free and unlimited access to it to men. To such lengths did he carry the virtue of prudence, that, in the notes bequeathed by him to his successors with regard to the pleasure grounds belonging to his Religious, he says: "It is not seemly that a monk should, without cause, offer flowers with his own hand to a woman". He even forbade them to continue employing women to make hay, and load the waggons in the gardens.

"My instructions are," he says, in his notes, "that the grass in the gardens of the monastery should be cut, made, and loaded on waggons by men or by youths, but not by women or young girls, particularly at those hours when the Brethren are at liberty to walk in the gardens, though it cost more to employ men than women at these things. It is better that the purse should suffer than the soul."

He also recommended purity of the exterior, as reflecting inward purity. If he noticed any untidiness in the monks' cells, he showed his dissatisfaction

at it. "One should love poverty," he said, like St. Bernard, "but not dirt." Thus, he always insisted upon the rooms, apartments in common, and, above all, the Church being cleaned with scrupulous care.

Finally, he did not shrink from bodily mortification. "The flower of Chastity," he used to say, "blooms amidst the macerations of the body, as a lily does in the midst of thorns." Though he had been prevailed upon, by the advice of wise and prudent men, to give up much of the primitive austerity of his rule, he did not on that account suffer bodily mortification to be abandoned, and he recommended it as a powerful auxiliary to his Religious.

I know that these practices excite feelings of contempt and indignation with many, who see neither their use nor grandeur, as exercised by monks; but it is not necessary to have a great acquaintance with the history of the Church or of the Saints, to call to mind the pointed flint with which St. Jerome was wont to strike his breast, when the recollection of past scenes of dissipation returned to his memory, or the prickly thorn bushes into which St. Benedict plunged, and by which his body was cruelly torn; or, in fine, to come down to our own times, the austerities, even unto blood, of

which the crypt of Solesmes bore the trace, and which an eloquent voice has revealed to us.[1]

At the time when a most grievous separation was being accomplished, when the nations of Europe—till then united by one faith—were being utterly rent asunder, and when proud intellects were deeming it unbearable that they should have in heaven an indefatigable Patroness and the most pure ideal of spouses and mothers, it was meet that a soul so loving as that of Louis de Blois should pour itself forth to the Blessed Virgin in accents of the most faithful and touching tenderness. How exquisite are the prayers which he has addressed to her; alas! why is it that our language is unfitted to do them justice? We can, at least, give this passage from the "Consolatio pusillanimium," in which he exalts the perpetual Advocate of souls. "When a profound sorrow afflicts and weighs us down, and we no longer know where to seek refuge, nothing remains for us, Holy Virgin Mary, most powerful Queen of Heaven, but to lift our eyes to thee. The more

[1] "And you, faithful servant of God, sleep your last sleep, beneath the shadow of the Church, which you have saved from profanation. Your humility aspired to nothing higher than a resting place in the midst of your sons; their filial piety has obtained that an exception should be made in your favour. They have laid you in the crypt which you had consecrated to the Heart of Jesus, after having hollowed it out with your hands, and more than once stained it with your blood."—Mgr. Pye, *Funeral Oration of Dom Guéranger.*

we are entangled in sin, so much the more reason is there why we should approach thee. The greater our malice, the more right we consider we have to take refuge in thee. Thou art the sole consolation of the guilty, the only refuge of sinners ; it is towards thee that the sorrowful turn their eyes filled with tears, towards thee that hearts that are wounded and stricken sigh. Cast then upon my misery that tender glance of thine, which no sinner, however abandoned or sorrowful, has ever been refused. How many victims of sin would have given up God, and renounced for ever the joys of their eternal home, hadst thou not in thy marvellous bounty merited for them the favour of being once more received into grace? Where is the man who is so stained with crime, so plunged in misery, that he has not taken fresh hope and courage with the thought of thee? How many times hast thou not tempered the just severity of a much-to-be-dreaded Judge, and turned away His strokes?

"Thou hast been called Queen and Mother of Mercy, and this is what in truth thou art."

Louis de Blois has also earned, by his tender devotion to Our Lady, the merit of lifting a corner of the veil in which the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, notwithstanding the opinion of the great doctors of the Church, was still enveloped,

thus outstripping by three centuries the immense acclamation by which Mary was to be proclaimed Immaculate, and which was also to surround the pontificate of Pius IX. with incomparable glory.

"The God of glory," he says, "has shown Himself admirable in His very dear and most amiable Mother. Never has He given, never will He give life to a creature who is her equal in dignity, grace, majesty, and glory. He has made an exception in her favour to the universal law, by preserving her from all stain of original and actual sin. Her purity, her holiness, and her perfection, are adorned with such brilliancy, that it surpasses that of all angels. Not the smallest doubt is to be conceived about the purity of the conception of this virgin Mother of God, though several Fathers of old appear to have doubted it, because the Roman Church had not then celebrated a feast in its honour.

"But in the present day, Catholics throughout all Christendom, walking in the footsteps of the Roman Church (which is the mistress of all the Churches), celebrate with joyful devotion this feast which has already been so long instituted; they honour the first starting-point of our happiness in the first moment when the infinitely beautiful soul of Mary, emerging from the hands of God, was united

to her body without being stained by original sin. A holy Father, in commenting upon the passage of Isaias, 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse,' says, with much precision of language: 'Mary is this rod, who had no blemish in her origin, and who was never enveloped in the bark of venial sin'. Another Father has said again: 'It is rash to attribute to the Virgin Mary any fault or sin whatever'. This is the truth, and who in these days would dare to assert that this sublime creature, whose purity is greater than that of the angelic spirits, has ever been exposed to original sin by which men are born children of wrath? Was it not fitting that she, who was one day to bring forth Jesus Christ, and crush the head of the old serpent, should not even for one instant be under the dominion of this serpent? Such is the tremendous privilege with which God has honoured His Mother."[1]

In almost all his writings, the holy Abbot has sought to give examples of the merciful intervention of the Blessed Virgin, and thus, in the "Monile Spirituale," he quotes a singular revelation of St. Bridget's.

St. Bridget, being moved to commiseration for a powerful and illustrious nobleman, who, though dangerously ill, would not confess his sins to a

[1] Dicta patrum.

priest, was praying for him. Jesus-Christ appeared to the saint as she was doing so, and addressed these words to her: "Tell your Confessor to visit this sick man". The priest went, and received this answer: "I have no need of confession". The following day Jesus Christ once more ordered St. Bridget to make the Confessor return again, and he was received in the same manner. The third day the priest returned, and made known to the sick man that according to the revelations of the saint, his salvation was compromised.

The man then burst into tears, and said to the priest: "I can never obtain pardon, my conscience is defiled by too many crimes". "Yet," answered the priest, "should you have committed infinitely worse ones, you might still be saved by confession and true contrition." "I despaired of the salvation of my soul," replied the poor man, "because I had given myself entirely over to the devil, who has indeed often spoken to me. I am nearly sixty, and I have never yet confessed my sins, or received communion. I hardly know what it is to have tears in my eyes."

That very day he confessed himself three times; the next day, after a last confession, he received the Holy Eucharist, and died.

Later on, our Lord, speaking to St. Bridget about

this nobleman, told her that he was not in hell, but in purgatory, because he repented, and went to confession. "My compassion waited for the conversion of this man till his very last hour, and he owes his salvation to the merits of My Mother, to whom he had ever great devotion, and he shall be saved."[1]

In those unhappy times, when France and Germany were a prey to the inroads of Protestantism, Louis de Blois seemed to have been sent by God to prevent the incipient heresy and its partizans from effecting an entrance into Belgium. After having composed the "Collyrium Hereticorum," of which we have had occasion to speak, he wished to support his own authority by that of the Fathers and of the Councils, and thus he collected, under the title of "The Torch,"[2] their opinions on controverted points. "He wished," say the Bollandists, "by means of the decrees of Councils and the words of forty ancient Fathers to kindle, as it were, as many lights which he would place on 'the candlestick,' not so much to enlighten those already in the Church, as to shine forth like a beacon for those who were being driven on the rocks by the wind of novelties." "This little book," says the author himself, "which presents to

[1] *Monile Spirituale.* Cap. I.

[2] The true title is this—"Facula illuminandis et ab errore avocandis Hereticis accommoda".

us the image of the primitive Church, was composed in the year of our Lord 1561, in the month of October. Though it appears somewhat confused in form, this work may still be of some use to heretics, were they to read and study it attentively."

What most distressed and provoked Louis amongst the errors of Protestantism was the furious onslaught it made upon all devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

"Woe to those unfortunate souls," he says, "woe to those heretics who make enemies to themselves of that incomparable Virgin, and who seek to tarnish her glory and her magnificence! Yes, woe to those who manifest a contempt for devotion to this great Queen! They are filled with indignation because we call her our hope in life, the Advocate of our salvation! Why, they say, do you treat Mary as a goddess? Should we place all our hopes in a creature? Not so; we do not worship Mary as a goddess, but we honour her as being the mother of God and the first after Him. We do not place our hope and confidence in Mary in such a manner as to believe that she does not receive life and power from God. We maintain, on the contrary, that she has received all things from Him, Who has created and chosen her. The Creator has given to His creature, the Son has given to His Mother a great

power; He has willed to honour her with a special privilege, and this is why we place the hope of our salvation in her, not, we repeat once more, in putting her before Him, but in placing her after Him; for our Saviour, Who is the source of all good and glory, is the sole Giver of all gifts."[1]

This noble ardour, which animated him against heretics, did not prevent his displaying, when there was occasion for it, a true and genuine compassion towards them. Some noblemen, belonging to the court of Mary of Austria, having allowed themselves to be led away by the new doctrines, the Queen, knowing the virtue and wisdom of the Abbot of Liessies, judged him more fitting than any other to bring them back to the Catholic faith. She, accordingly, assigned Liessies to them as a residence, with the express order that they were not to go outside of the precincts of the monastery.

Amongst the number of the misled there was, say the Bollandists, a man of illustrious birth, whose name, out of prudence, they have thought better not to hand down to posterity. He had carried away with him, in his fall into error, the greater part of his family, and had, by his active proselytism, drawn down on his head the harshest treatment from the Queen of Hungary.

[1] Canon vitæ spiritualis.

Louis de Blois received him with kindness, held lengthened discussions with him on the subject of his errors, and afforded him all possible means of convincing himself of the truth of Catholic doctrine. The nobleman was so touched by these attentions, and by the irreproachable life led by the abbot and his monks, that he not only abjured his errors, but became a model of exemplary piety.

Louis de Blois gives testimony of this in a letter to the Queen of Hungary, which proves how charitable the holy abbot was to individuals, severe as he was when it was a question of principles.

"Madame, the extreme compassion which I feel for N——, banished by your orders to our house of Liessies, makes me take the liberty of addressing this letter to you. This man is of most upright character and conduct, and he has scrupulously conformed to all the rules prescribed to him. He is a more firm adherent of the Catholic faith at the present moment than if he had never left it, and I have perfect confidence in his future. He shows the greatest horror of his fault, less indeed by words than by his conduct. He assists every day at divine office. His opinions are thoroughly sound also upon the subject of the Sacraments, and the laws and ceremonies of our holy Church.

"This is why, should your Majesty by an act

of clemency restore him to liberty, you would do an action which, in my opinion, you would never have reason to regret. I say this with the greater conviction, inasmuch as, having lived with him for seven months, I have ever found him loyal and sincere, and ready to acknowledge that he had formerly been guilty of dissimulation in endeavouring to hide his change of religion. He owns his fault, and has severely expiated it, for this prolonged detention has ruined his health. He has never asked me to take any steps, in writing or in other ways, in his favour, but I perceive the deep depression by which he is overwhelmed. He is of a melancholy nature, and if pity is not shown him I dread seeing him fall into the depths of despair.

"My petition to your Majesty is, therefore, to give him leave to pass the monastic enclosure in order to take some exercise, even should it be on condition that he is not to absent himself for the night without your Majesty's permission. If this favour is granted him, the unfortunate man will understand that it is intended to soften his lot, and will persevere with all the more fervour in his present life. I pray God, Madame, to give your Majesty every prosperity.

"From your Majesty's very humble and obedient chaplain, LOUIS DE BLOIS."

This letter procured the captive his liberty and his restoration to his former dignities. Returning to his family, who, following his own example, abjured heresy, he did not rest satisfied with living piously according to the counsels of the Abbot of Liessies, but he wished also to turn his house into a sort of monastic retreat, and to his tender respect for Louis de Blois we owe the preservation of the one supernatural fact connected with the latter's memory. He asserted that, during his imprisonment, he had often seen the Abbot, whilst at prayer, surrounded with a great halo of light, and that ever since then the resplendent figure of his benefactor had appeared to him each night in his sleep.

But the most astonishing conversion wrought by our Abbot was that of a nobleman (whose name the Bollandists are again too discreet to divulge), who had purchased, at a great price, from a magician an enchanted ring like that of Gyges. By means of this ring the devil, bound by a secret compact, came in human form to put himself at his disposal, and proceeded to carry out his orders. But Satan from being servant had become master, and held in direst slavery this remorse-stricken and tortured soul. The unfortunate man was seeking by every

kind of means to break his bonds asunder, when, happily, he made Louis de Blois's acquaintance.

Having heard the tender words of the Abbot, when preaching upon the mercy of God and His love for sinners, he manifested to him, with many tears, the terrible state he was in, and the chains by which he was bound to Satan.

Louis de Blois succeeded in restoring confidence to the unfortunate man, and in bringing him back to the practices of Christianity.

The Bollandists, ever most prudent in their acceptation of facts of this nature, add that the nobleman, after his conversion, whilst walking upon the fortifications of his castle, had an apparition of the devil, who attempted, but in vain, to cast him over into the moat. He invoked the name of God, made the sign of the cross, and the enemy of salvation disappeared to return no more.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ABBOT OF LIESSIES ASSISTS AT A SYNOD IN THE PROVINCE OF CAMBRAY—HIS ILLNESS AND DEATH.

> "And when he saw Liessies brought to a state of perfection, he was seized with a desire to go to Paradise. One day, whilst looking at the building, he stumbled against a piece of wood and slightly bruised himself. This accident brought on fever, and the fever, preying upon him for about the space of three months, finally led to his death. The discourses he held with his brethren, the dispositions of his soul, the counsels he gave, are all things worthy of undying remembrance."—*Rev. Fr. Binet.*

OTWITHSTANDING the importance of the Council of Trent's labours, its solemn decisions, and the glory shed upon Europe by the constellation of Saints with which God favoured the sixteenth century, Protestantism, represented in almost every kingdom by men of influence, had completely invaded Germany, found formidable partizans and secret sympathies in France, and menaced the Netherlands, in spite of the iron hand by which they were ruled.

"Louis de Blois saw with the deepest concern the immense destruction of souls caused by the new heresy—saw with grief the ministers of error

rising up in all directions like a pack of devouring wolves, waiting but for a favourable moment to lay waste the fold of Christ. His keen insight into the future caused him to foresee great misfortunes for Belgium, and this thought filled him with such profound sentiments of compassion that a longer life would have been burdensome to him, and he asked of the Lord to take him away from the world, desiring, as in his own day St. Paul did, 'to be dissolved and to be with Christ'."[1]

Maximilian de Berghes had obtained, through his regard for him, his presence at a provincial synod, where all the prelates of the diocese of Cambray had been convoked, and Louis de Blois had returned in sorrow to Liessies when an accident, apparently of slight importance, occurred, which forthwith realized both his presentiments and his desires.

Very shortly after his return to Liessies, the Abbot, whilst inspecting the monastery-buildings, struck his leg against a beam, thereby inflicting a slight wound upon it. At the end of some weeks the sore, far from healing, began to assume an alarming appearance, a slow fever setting in condemned him to absolute rest, and ended by causing grave anxiety to his brethren.

[1] *Acta SS.*, Jan. Vol. I.

Dom John Lentailleur, the Abbot of Anchin, distressed at seeing him in this state, sent a skilful physician, with whom he was well acquainted, to his assistance. The physician tried every kind of remedy, but did not succeed in arresting the evil, or in restoring the Abbot's enfeebled limbs to health and vigour, although all his prescriptions were submitted to with ready obedience.

Four months elapsed; the physician, hopeless of doing him any good, departed, and the faithful servant, feeling that "his life was being furled up like the tents of the shepherd," awaited with impatience the day of the coming of the Lord.

In the beginning of January, 1566, he understood that the end was approaching; accordingly, without waiting to be warned of its necessity, he asked for Extreme Unction, and summoned his children around him to bid them his last farewell.

"A valiant soldier," he says in the 'Enchiridion,' "trembles sometimes before the fight, nevertheless he goes bravely to the attack." The entire community assembled around their Father's bed-side, to encourage him in his death-struggle, and to take example of the glorious combatant.

Let us also enter with tender respect into this humble cell, let us listen to the sacred chant, to the lamentations which break its silence; doubtless

they will reveal to us the history of affections "strong as death," of which the cloister has ever carefully guarded the secret, as well as the calm intrepidity with which the true soldier of Christ knows how to face his passage into eternity. Louis de Blois's life, the obstacles he met with, his influence in Hainault, the history of his monastery, are things which may perhaps awaken the interest of some readers; but how many the afflicted souls, worn out with sorrow, in whom this simple narrative, which I borrow from the Bollandists, will excite those salutary, ever refreshing emotions which the last moments of a saint never fail to call forth!

His brethren, who for nearly forty years had lived under his firm and yet gentle rule, refused to believe that the moment of separation had come, and their strong, deep love, love consecrated by the love of God which an eloquent monastic pen—that of Pierre de Blois—has so ably delineated, made them burst forth into sobs and cries even in the midst of the prayers and liturgical chants.

"The Abbot," say the Bollandists, "received Extreme Unction with unspeakable joy and consolation, and as the Religious, his crown and spiritual joy, surrounded his bed of sickness, imploring with eyes wet with tears, and countenances filled with sorrow, the blessing of their dying Father, he re-

peated to them, in a devout, clear, and gentle voice, the celebrated protestation of a man approaching his end, which is to be found in his 'Enchiridion,' and which he knew by heart:

"'I, unworthiest of sinners, who have been redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, I protest aloud that I forgive from the bottom of my heart all those who have injured me, and I beg all who are here present, as well as all who are absent, on their part to forgive me.

"'I acknowledge that up to this moment I have not lived with that purity and sanctity which God requires of me. I acknowledge the greatness of my faults and the number of my negligences.

"'I implore the Infinite Mercy to pardon me all the evil I have committed during my life; notwithstanding the gravity and multitude of my offences, I shall never cease from trusting in the mercy of my Redeemer, and I hope through the merits of His Passion and Death to have part in His celestial inheritance.

"'I look upon His most holy Passion as my surest defence and place of refuge; It is the impenetrable armour with which I shall encounter my invisible foes. I offer It to the most Holy Trinity in default of any merit of my own, and in entire satisfaction for my sins.

"'I proclaim in the presence of the Almighty, and all the Court of Heaven, that I desire and intend to die in this faith, as becomes a child of our mother, Holy Church. I profess my belief in all the articles of the Catholic Faith, as they are believed in by all the truly orthodox. And should I, either through the suggestions of the devil, or in the paroxysms of illness, be induced to think, speak, or act contrary to this declaration, I revoke beforehand what I may then say, and protest that I do not in any way consent thereunto.

"'Full of joy and gratitude towards my merciful Creator and Saviour, I have every confidence of dying in those sentiments which His ineffable goodness requires of all the Faithful. Into His hands I commend my body and soul, now, and at the hour of my death.'"[1]

[1] "Ego peccator indignissimus, redemptus pretiosissimo sanguine Domini Nostri Jesu Christi; palam profiteor me sincero corde ignoscere omnibus qui quovis modo mihi injuriam vel molestiam aliquam unquam intulerunt; et humiliter rogo tam præsentes quam absentes omnes, ut mihi vicissim ignoscant et dimittant si in aliquo eos offendi. Agnosco me hactenus non vixisse pure nec sancte coram Domino sicut vivere debueram: agnosco scelera mea multa nimis; agnosco culpas et negligentias meas infinitas. Agnosco quidquid mali per omnem vitam commisi et supplici mente a misericordissimo Domino Deo nostro veniam peto; dolens quod unquam eum offenderim et proponens deinceps vitare peccata. Quamvis autem graviter, et multis modis hactenus deliquerim non tamen diffido de omnipotenti et benignissima misericordia ipsius Redemptoris mei;

When he had finished this profession of faith, Louis commanded his brethren to moderate their grief, and addressed this courageous discourse to them, which reminds one at the same time of the last harangue of a general to his soldiers, and of the wise counsels which the head of a family might dictate from his death-bed to his children.

"Beloved brethren and friends, young men and old, you have just heard my profession of faith, and I renew it once more before God and you. It is through the Divine Will, as you know, that it has been given to us to live so long under the same rule, and during these long years, human frailty has

sed spero me per meritum Passionis et mortis ejus, non autem per merita mea, participem futurum æternæ vitæ atque hæreditatis. Ego ipsam Passionem ejus sacratissimam pro refugio munimentoque tutissimo habeo, ego eam inimicis meis invisibilibus semper et ubique tamquam armaturam inexpugnabilem objicio, eam Sanctæ Trinitati pro meritis quæ mihi desunt et pro perfecta satisfactione de peccatis meis offero. . . . Protestor coram ipso omnipotenti Deo, et coram tota curia cœlesti, me cupere et velle in ea fide vitam hanc finire, in qua convenit obedientem sanctæ matris Ecclesiæ filium mori. Protestor me credere, universa quæ ipsa catholica fides continet, et quæ a veris orthodoxisque Christi fidelibus credenda sunt. Quod si, vel impugnatione diaboli vel violentia morbi pressus, aliquid huic proposito contrarium cogitarem, loquerer aut facerem, jam illud revoco et contestor, me nullatenus consentire talibus cogitationibus, verbis aut operibus. Gaudeo et gratias ago misericordissimo Creatori et Salvatori meo, cujus ineffabili pietate me in sancta fide Christiana moriturum confido. In manus ejus sanctissimas animam et corpus meum nunc et in hora mortis meæ commendo."—(*Enchiridion parvulorum, cap. ii., l. II. Cologne*, 1615.)

hardly succeeded in creating the least dissension amongst us. Yet, notwithstanding this, I have prayed you, and once more I renew my prayer to you, that you should forgive me—the highest as well as the lowest amongst you—all the sufferings or annoyances I may have caused you. And if any amongst those who are assembled here have done me any wrong, let them hereby receive the public assurance that what they have done is forgotten and pardoned.

"Let the strictest discipline, I beg of you, be ever preserved amongst you, and remember the vocation to which you are called. In all things seek God's glory, and despise the pleasures of the world.

"Look at the state in which you see me, do not deceive yourselves, some day it will also be yours. The strongest and most vigorous amongst you will have one day to face the struggles which I am this moment undergoing. What will it profit you, I ask you, in the words of Holy Scripture, to gain the whole world if your soul is lost for ever. If, on the contrary, your life has been a virtuous one, if you have sought God, your soul will be calm and peaceful at the last hour. The law of death is inevitable. Sooner or later, for our salvation, or for our damnation, we must quit this world which so quickly passes away. Think seriously of this,

therefore, and strive to prepare yourselves each day for a good death.

"For my part, if God so wills, I should prefer to die this very day, than abide any longer amid the ravages of sin. When God will have called me to Himself, my brethren, be tranquil and submissive, walk gently in holy humility and obedience, fervently pursue the paths which are marked out for you: recite the Divine Office with devotion. Were you to do otherwise, God would be displeased, the good scandalised, and you yourselves dishonoured. Let other Congregations serve as examples to you. Those whose statutes are wisely regulated conduct themselves in a becoming manner after the death of a superior, until such time as Providence shall have provided for their wants. You know how highly our monastery is everywhere esteemed, behave in such manner as to preserve this good reputation.

"Strive, above all, to live in peace and love, avoiding quarrels, jealousies, and animosities. Acquire true charity, that which has its roots deep down in the heart, and not that which is visible merely on the lips. When God shall have given you another Abbot, submit to him in all things that are not contrary to reason. Finally, do not forget your Father, who had the care of your souls, in your prayers, and ask with

me that my last sigh may be breathed forth in love and faith. I feel within me the consoling assurance that I shall find you all again in the joys of Paradise. I recommend you all to God—pray for me and go in peace."[1]

Such were the words of the new Simeon, who prayed the Lord to let him penetrate into His glory, and recommended to Him from the bottom of his heart the good of his religious and the honour of his monastery.

Left alone with one brother, he repeated those words of Isaias: "Be comforted, be comforted, my people, say to the faint-hearted, take courage, behold your God," and then fell into a long agony, which only terminated on the 7th of January, 1566. He was fifty-nine years of age, had been professed forty-five years, and for thirty-six years had held the office of Abbot.

This death, does it not recall to one's mind that of the immortal historian of Great Britain? When he was about to die, the Venerable Bede, left alone with the youth who had just finished writing down the last lines dictated by him, turned his dying head to the sanctuary where he used to pray, and in silence and recollection sought, like Louis de Blois, in God—with that interior peace with

[1] The Bollandists.—*Acta, SS.*, Jan. Vol. I.

which He favours His elect—the foretaste of his eternal recompense.

But must we go back to the golden age—the ages of faith—to find similar examples, and does God refuse the inspiring sight of a calm and holy death to ours? No! our times also have witnessed the like scenes, when death has been in truth swallowed up in victory, *absorpta est mors in victoria*, and if at times the Cloister permits not the world to penetrate its consoling secrets, let us thank those historians, both ancient and modern, who have ever taken pains faithfully to transmit to us, in their Lives of Saints, a description of that moment so dreaded by every child of Adam.

"It is not without suffering," says Pascal, "that man becomes free, and having found no cure for death, misery and ignorance, deems it best not to think of them."[1]

And yet what do we not learn from death? By how much does that man—a Christian, be it understood—condemned to undergo it, who has been purified by love, and pardoned, who is sustained by God, and already enlightened by that divine illumination which his soul will soon know in all its intensity, exceed in beauty and grandeur the most illustrious of conquerors!

[1] *Thoughts*, by Pascal.

"Oh ye faces of Saints! lips sweet and strong, accustomed to invoke God, and to kiss the Cross of His Son, beloved looks which discover a Father in the poorest of creatures, hair grown gray in meditations upon eternity—sacred colours of the soul which shine the more in old age and death—happy is he who has seen you! Happier still he who has understood you, and who has learned from your transfigured and shining garments lessons of wisdom and of immortality."[1]

It seems, then, that to such as boldly look upon death as inevitable though painful, who consider its sacrifices, taste its bitterness, and compare its sorrows with those of our dying Saviour, Almighty God has graciously given, in addition to the satisfaction of a well-spent life, the supreme consolation of a calm and happy death—a death accepted in all humility, and leaving its victim in full consciousness on the very brink of eternity.

St. Benedict causes the grave in which he wished to be buried to be opened beforehand, and there receives, standing beside his grave, at the foot of the altar the Viaticum, thus obliging death at his pleasure to stay its hand. Twelve centuries later, that glorious orator, Father Ravignan, when exhausted by a long and laborious life of triumphant elo-

[1] 48th Conference of Lacordaire.

quence, illuminates with a last ray the cell which was about to witness his release.

What a glorious agony! How he lords it over death! How vigilant he is in his preparation! What stern grandeur in his demeanour! How well he knows how to speak of this last enterprise, which, like all others, has to be conducted with decision and energy! In those last moments he receives his reward for years of sacrifice and humility. Does he not seem to agree with and repeat what was said by Pascal: "One of the great principles of Christianity is that every Christian should undergo in their body and soul whatever Jesus Christ underwent; that as Christ suffered in His mortal life, was raised again to a new one, and ascended into Heaven, so the body and soul have to suffer, die, rise again, and ascend into Heaven?"

Again there is another triumphant agony, by which the touching scene which three centuries before was witnessed by the Benedictines of Liessies is renewed. A brother in religion of Louis de Blois, and like him, "marvellously directed from his very youth to the things which appertain to the divine service,"[1] filled as he was with the true spirit of St. Benedict, like him, and even greater than him, in times more difficult, on a soil strewn with the ruins

[1] *Funeral Oration of Dom Guéranger.*

of the past,—called to re-enter into the possession of a wasted inheritance, has presented, at the very hour when I began this work, the vivifying spectacle of a holy and eloquent death.

But it is for others, better informed and more worthy of belief, to give an account of the triumph which the dying man himself signified, by commanding his sons to chant the *Te Deum* with him. "He did not expect death to come upon him so suddenly," says Monsignor Pie, "but when he beheld it close at hand he threw all his care upon God, and had but one thought, which was that of thanksgiving. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul!' he cried, 'and let all that is within me bless His holy name.'"[1]

Let us also abandon ourselves to those emotions, born of hope, which a perusal of these stern but encouraging narratives should excite in our souls, and to the attraction they awaken in us towards the world to come.

What know we of that fate which is reserved for us? How many are there not among us, who, having dreamed of dying in the midst of their own people, surrounded by those whose affection had made life dear to them, and have had for their lot but the anguish of a distant and solitary agony? How many who have seen the last moment of

[1] *Funeral Oration of Dom Guéranger.*

separation draw near, and rejoiced, whose failing hand found no friendly one held out to press it?

But let us not accuse God of having added for them to the horrors of that dread moment which precedes our passage into eternity, let us rather think that he has willed by this final and cruel separation to transform those last defiles into regions of light and joy, and let us repeat with Louis de Blois: "For I know the thoughts I have about you, they are thoughts of peace, and not of affliction, to give you an end and patience.[1] Then will you invoke me, and you will return to the land of your fathers, and I shall have mercy on you. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.[2]

"Lord, Thou hast said to Thy disciples: 'It is I, fear not,' deign to cast one look of mercy upon my soul, and console it with a few words. In the hour of my death say to me, I implore Thee: 'I am thy Salvation, fear not; let not thine iniquities frighten thee, I am the Advocate of the guilty; fear not the darkness, I am the Light; fear not corruption, I am the Resurrection; fear not death, I am the Life; fear not hell, I am the Redemption'."

[1] Jerem. xxix. 11.

[2] Isaias xliii. 1.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

NOTE I.

EXTRACT FROM THAT PART OF THE LIFE OF LOUIS DE BLOIS WHICH RELATES TO THE WORKS OF THAT HOLY MAN.

(*Taken from the Bollandists.*)

ALTHOUGH we had proposed to ourselves, says Bollandus, to give to the world the lives and actions of those Saints only whose holiness has been consecrated by the authority of the Church, and who have been held up for veneration upon her altars, or who have been the subjects of popular devotion from time immemorial, yet we could not, we ought not to pass over in silence, under penalty of being accused of ingratitude, the name of the venerable Abbot Louis de Blois, who, though he has undoubtedly not received the homage of public devotion, yet is everywhere celebrated for the eminent sanctity of his life. Our Society in its earliest commencement was favoured with his protection, which the good-will shown by his successors to our Order

even down to our own times has never belied, and in particular that evinced by Antony de Winghe, the fourth abbot of Liessies counting from Louis de Blois; of this eminent personage, however, we have already sufficiently spoken in the Prolegomena. In addition to this, the works of Blosius having been of great service all over the world, we have thought that we should be doing what would be agreeable to our readers by placing before them the life of an author whose works enjoy so vast a reputation.

II.—This life has been composed from materials in the possession of the Monastery of Liessies, and from other documents, with the assistance also of the trustworthy evidence of a Doctor of Theology belonging to the Benedictine Order. The author, however, having, before bringing it out, submitted it to the religious of Liessies, they and, in particular, the Abbot de Winghe (who was remarkable for his intellectual discernment), made so many alterations to it, both in the matter of it and in the choice of expressions, that it was, to speak accurately, no longer the same life. Thus we have thought it best to suppress the name of the original writer, with his own concurrence, and with that of the monks of Liessies, and of divers other persons who have honoured us with their friendship.

III.—This life was first published, in 1632, with the

works of Louis de Blois, which the monks of Liessies gave to the world—the works were enriched with learned notes, newly classified, and sealed with the approbation of the three celebrated universities of Cologne, Ingolstadt, and Douay. To this they subjoined numerous eulogiums upon the life and writings of Louis de Blois, composed by various illustrious and learned men. These we shall omit. In addition to this they inserted several prefaces (from the third of which we shall give extracts), containing the catalogue of his works in the order in which they were composed—this catalogue forming in some sort part of his life.

Two years afterwards, Fr. Etienne Binet, of the Company of Jesus, published a book upon the principal founders of Religious Orders, whose pictures were to be seen in the choir of the Church of Liessies, and amongst others he mentions Louis de Blois not as founder of a new Order, but as reformer of an ancient monastery. In the dedication of this work, he says, that at Liessies he has seen three kinds of saints: some dead in reliquaries, others painted in their pictures; others, finally, living saints, to wit, the monks and the Abbot de Winghe; but that these latter have forbidden him to speak in their praise. Nevertheless he has not always been able to adhere strictly to this prohibition; for, if he and

other writers were silent, the forests and neighbouring hills themselves would find voices, as though they also in some sense were moved at the sight of their holiness, as of yore the rocks of Arabia were moved at the passage of the Son of God.

Louis de Blois's writings from the account given of them in the Prolegomena of Liessies—Louis de Blois's works in the order of years in which they were published—Translation of the Comparison between the King and the Monk—Mirror for Monks—Letter, consisting of twelve documents—Canon Vitæ Spiritualis—The Paradise of the Faithful Soul—Cimeliarchion—Enchiridion Parvulorum—Psychagogia—Collyrium Hereticorum—The Faithful Soul's Retreat—Institutio Spiritualis—Rule for Beginners—Consolatio Pusillanimium—Margaritum Spirituale—Conclave of the Faithful Soul—Facula Illuminandis—Complete edition of his works—Translations of them.

IV.—We believe that our readers will see, not without pleasure, at the head of Louis de Blois's life, the date and, as it were, the starting-point of that

venerable man's works. We have drawn out these tables all the more willingly that Fr. J. Frojus, who was the first to unite Louis de Blois's writings together in one volume, though he professed, as he says in his preface, to follow chronological order in so doing, has yet occasionally departed from it. This may be seen in the case of the "Conclave of the Faithful Soul," which he puts considerably before the "Psychagogia"; whereas Louis de Blois himself, in the letter given at the end of the "Conclave," advises him to whom it was addressed to read the "Psychagogia," which he had drawn, he says, some years previously from the works of St. Augustine and St. Gregory.

V.—Although Louis de Blois translated in his youth, first of any of his works, "The Comparison between the King and the Monk" of St. John Chrysostom from Greek into Latin, as he was less author than editor of this treatise, we may, in common with Arnold Wion, Antoine Possevin, and others, look upon the "Mirror for Monks," which he published under the pseudonym of the Abbot Dacryanus, as his first production. (The fact that Louis de Blois and Dacryanus were one and the same person is established by invincible proofs in the "Prolegomena," see Articles VI. and VII.). This work was printed at Louvain by Bartholomew

Gravius, in 4to, in 1538, eight years after the author's nomination to the office of Abbot. The "Mirror for Monks" was brought out a second time by the same press, this time in 8vo, when it received the addition of a letter consisting of twelve papers, which, with short appendices to each paper, was again published by the Abbot under the name of Dacryanus. Later on, he made considerable additions to these appendices, and he once more added them to the above-mentioned documents in the "Enchiridion Parvulorum," which he also headed with a short preface which is wanting in the second addition of the "Mirror"; in fine, the papers differ in terms here and there in the two editions. In this second edition, Louis de Blois added a salutation in verse to Jesus and Mary, and it appeared with the Emperor's approbation in the year 1538; and it is stated in the approbation that the "Mirror" has been examined and authorised by Ruard Tapper, Chancellor of the University of Louvain.

VI.—In 1539, he wrote his "Canon Vitæ Spiritualis," as one learns from the preface which he addresses to Cardinal de Quignonez. This "Canon," enlarged by an "Abridgment of the Life of Jesus Christ, taken from the Four Gospels," a "Little Treasure of Pious Formulas of Prayers,"

"The Marrow of Psalmody," and a "Little Office of Hours of Jesus and Mary," was once more edited (but under the title of "The Paradise of the Faithful Soul,") in 8vo, in the year 1540, at Antwerp, by William Montan, with the approbation of Ruard Tapper, and other theologians. The "Canon Vitæ Spiritualis" was, later on, augmented and revised, and appeared separately in 1549, in 8vo, at Louvain, from the printing press of Gravius; the "Hymn of Rejoicing of the soul enamoured of Christ" was then added to it. The Emperor's approbation again heads this edition, which bears the date of the year 1547. It is here said that the "Canon," as well as the four following treatises:—the "Cimeliarchion" (Little Treasure); the "Enchiridion" (Manual); the "Psychagogia" (Recreation of the Soul); and the "Collyrium," had been examined and approved of by Ruard Tapper. Finally, the "Canon" was again brought out in one volume, in 12mo, by Wolfgang Eder, at Ingolstadt, in 1585; mental and vocal prayers, and meditations for the seven days of the week were added to it.

VII.—In 1549, Louis de Blois published another Cimeliarchion which differed much from the first; it was printed by Gravius, in 8vo. He relegated to a later work—containing other short formulas of prayers—the greater part of the mental prayers

contained in the first edition (of the "Cimeliarchion") and substituted new meditations and devout prayers for them; at the end, before the prayer to Jesus, he inserted the cxviii psalm, which he divided into twenty-two parts of eight verses each, forming, to use his own expression, twenty-two little psalms. We have omitted it, following the example of J. Frojus, in our edition, as being sufficiently well known; we should not, however, like to deprive our readers of the reflection placed by Louis de Blois at its head; it is full of unction, and deserves to be seriously meditated upon by those who so often recite this psalm in the divine office. It is as follows:—"This psalm is of great sweetness and of marvellous efficacy; for in nearly all these verses the faithful soul addresses itself lovingly to God, and exchanges devout sentiments with Him, by means of the law, the commandments, the precepts, the testimonies, the paths, the justifications, the judgments, the words, and other things of a like nature," which one meets with at every step in this beautiful psalm, and which have the right understanding of the law of divine love, and the most amiable will of God for their end and object. At the end of the new edition of the "Cimeliarchion," the pious author adds: "Here we have concluded this Cimeliarchion of pious formulas of prayers.

And we have proposed to ourselves, by the help of God's grace, to write soon an 'Enchiridion' for children, at the end of which we shall also add Prayers and Doxologies (acts of thanksgiving)."

VIII.—He gave the "Enchiridion (Manual) of children" to the world, in the same year in which he had promised it (1549), and had it printed by Gravius, two volumes in 8vo: the first volume contains the epistle, consisting of twelve papers, which came out under the name of Dacryanus, though differing slightly in terms from the first edition; it also contains copious appendices, full of unction; the second volume treats principally on preparation for a good death. Louis de Blois concludes this edition in the following manner: "The faithful soul, whose delight it is assiduously to pray to God and praise Him, should she not find here sufficient food for her piety, possesses all David's Psalter; besides this she has other excellent prayers and doxologies, taken from the Fathers. She may dwell on them as long as the grace of God leads her to do so. We have also recently published a 'Cimeliarchion' of pious formulas of prayers, at the end of which we have placed a prayer to Jesus, particularly adapted to those who desire to make progress in virtue, and, after this prayer, another, which contains precepts for every day." The author having suppressed this

conclusion in subsequent editions, and these words being omitted in the edition of Frojus and the following ones, we have not thought it advisable to restore them to the text.

IX.—In the year 1549 another "Psychagogia" (Recreation of the Soul) appeared, which was taken from the Fathers, and published first in 8vo by Bartholomew Gravius at Louvain, and afterwards reproduced, in 12mo, in the year 1560, by the widow of Martin Nutius.

X.—Shortly afterwards, Louis gave the "Collyrium Hereticorum" to the world, which was published by Gravius in 1549, in 8vo; in the preface, the author enumerated some of the treatises, written previously by him, in the following manner:—"We have published the following works: in our youth we translated a little book of St. John Chrysostom from Greek into Latin—'The Comparison between the King and the Monk'. Since then we have written, at different times, the 'Canon Vitæ Spiritualis,' the 'Cimeliarchion of Formulas of Prayer,' the 'Enchiridion Parvulorum,' the 'Psychagogia,' which was taken from the writings of our holy Fathers St. Augustine and St. Gregory, and, finally, this present work—the 'Collyrium'. May these treatises, notwithstanding their imperfections and defects, co-operate for the glory of God. This is

our most ardent desire, and we submit them joyfully and unreservedly to the judgment of the Apostolic See and the correction of our Fathers in the faith."

XI.—"The Comparison between the King and the Monk" was on this occasion added to the "Collyrium"; it was translated by Louis de Blois, from Greek into Latin, when he was still in his youth, and studying under the great classical scholar, Nicholas Clenard, in 1527. He dedicated it to a noble young man, John de Launoy Molembaix, his old friend and fellow-student. The reader will find observations of ours in the tenth section, entitled "Defence of Faith," upon the subject of the "Collyrium," as well as upon other controversial arguments upon the Faith, which the author has treated with equal force and success.

XII.—"The Faithful Soul's Retreat" was published about the year 1549. It comprises a spiritual *tableau* of pious formulas of prayer, which were taken from the previous edition of the "Cimeliarchion" (as has already been said), of prayers addressed to Jesus and Mary, of "Golden Sentences" by certain Fathers, and of the "Marrow of Psalmody". This "Marrow of Psalmody" had at first formed part of the "Paradise of the Soul," under the Greek title of "Myelodochion," then it

was included, after being slightly altered, in the "Retreat"; finally, we have restored it to its former position in the "Paradise of the Faithful Soul".

XIII.—In 1551, Louis de Blois wrote the "Institutio Spiritualis," as one may see from the epistle addressed by him to Florence du Mont. The reader will find in it all the fervour of the piety and the learning of the author directed against the depraved morals of irreligious men, and the shameless obstinacy of heretics. An appendix, taken from J. Taulerus's works, and those of other authors, was added to the "Institutio," also an exercise of pious prayers with meditations, an apology in behalf of Taulerus directed against Eckines, which has been praised by Cardinal Bellarmine in his book on "Ecclesiastical Writers," and by Antoine Possevin in his "Apparatus" in speaking of J. Taulerus. All these works were published together at Louvain by Antoine-Marie Bergagne in one volume, 8vo, in the year 1553, after having been examined and approved of by P. Curtius, then parish priest of St. Pierre, and, later on, Bishop of Bruges.

XIV.—A short "Rule for Spiritual Beginners" was published with the preceding work, the "Institutio," in the year 1553, and then, later on, in 1555, as a separate pamphlet, in 16mo, by Bergagne, and in this form was enriched with pious exercises and

thirteen short commandments; to this also P. Curtius gave his approbation.

XV.—The "Consolatio Pusillanimium," true panacea for all sufferings endured by afflicted souls and by consciences troubled with aridity, was published by Martin Nutius, in 12mo, in 1555; a Paradise (consolation) was added to it, taken from the holy Scriptures; Louis de Blois himself transferred this from the place it occupied in the "Paradise" to the new work. The "Consolatio" was edited a second time in the same form, in 1559, by the widow of Martin Nutius.

XVI.—"The Margaritum Spirituale" was brought out by J. Waes in 1555, in 8vo, at Louvain; it contains: A much longer abridgment or epitome of the Life of Jesus Christ, taken from the four Gospels, than the one inserted in "The Paradise"; an explanation of the Passion, the greater part of which is taken from Taulerus's works—a repertory (Farrago) of very useful lessons or readings; articles upon the life of Jesus Christ; the "Furnace of Divine Love"; some little exercises of pious prayers; and six psalms of admirable power and sweetness.

XVII.—The "Conclave (or Chamber) of the Faithful Soul," which contains the "Spiritual Mirror," the "Spiritual Bracelet," the "Spiritual Crown," and the "Little Spiritual Casket," ap-

peared at Antwerp, in the year 1558. It was reproduced, in 12mo, in 1564, by the firm of the widow of Martin Nutius.

XVIII.—Finally, Louis de Blois's last work was a "Torch to enlighten the minds of heretics in order to bring them back to the true path"; this he published four years before his death, 1562, in 12mo, from the printing-press of Peter Zangrius at Louvain.

XIX.—Behold, my readers, the admirable results of twenty-four fruitful years of Louis de Blois's life; and all these ascetic and controversial works, which he composed with the help and inspiration of God, were written, notwithstanding the share taken by him in the public affairs of the Church and of the country, and the occupations which the task of putting the monastery on a better footing necessitated, with the sole object of doing good to souls. These various treatises, after having been published separately at various epochs, were for the first time united into one whole by J. Frojus, our fellow-member, and a disciple of Louis de Blois, whose name we shall never pronounce without the greatest respect as one of blessed memory, and who after completing this work was made Abbot of Hasnon. He was not satisfied with a simple reproduction of these writings, but he enriched the edition which

he brought out, as he mentions in his preface, with summaries, notes, and other additions and improvements. It was printed by John Bogard at Louvain in 1568, in folio, with the approbation of Lawrence Metzius, doctor in theology, who was later on Bishop of Bois-le-Duc, two years after the pious death of its author. Louis de Blois's works appeared once more later, in folio, at Cologne, in the years 1572 and 1587, from the publishing firm of the heirs of Materne Cholin. They were brought out afterwards by Bernard Gaulthier, in 4to, in the years 1606, 1615, 1618, 1625; then in 1622, in 4to, at the expense of the "Little Society"; in fine, at Augsburg in 1626, in 5 volumes, 12mo, by Andrew Aperger, when they were edited and reviewed by Romain Hay, a religious of our Order in Suabia.

NOTE II.

THE ABBOTS OF LEISSIES.

HAD already quoted the names of the Abbots of Liessies as given in the "Gallia Christiana," but the learned Dr. Leglay, former Keeper of the Records of the North of France, having given more precise information respecting the lives of each one of these worthies in the "Cameracum Christianum," which information he completed in his "Catalogue of the Archives of Liessies," I borrow from him all that relates to the succession of its Abbots.

The authors of the "Gallia Christiana" give the name of Gontrade, brother of St. Hiltrude, as that of the first Abbot of Liessies. But since, by their own admission, this house was at first served by Canons, and was only really made use of and inhabited by monks towards the end of the eleventh century, it follows that the first of its Abbots must have lived about that period.

I.—Gontier or Gontard was, in 1096, called from

Crespin, where he performed the functions of Prior, to fill the abbatial chair at Liessies. The chronicler, James Lespée, attributes to him, amongst other works, the transcription of a book of homilies for the winter season, and also that of the homilies of St. Gregory the Great upon Ezechiel. Gontier died on the 8th of December, 1107.

II.—Renier de Carnières, mentioned by Mabillon as first Abbot of Liessies, busied himself also in the transcribing of books. It was in his time that Bartholomew, Bishop of Laon, consecrated the new Church of Liessies, which that prelate called his favourite child. Renier died on the 30th January, 1124. The Priory of Sart-les-Moines was presented to the Abbey about this time by Petronilla de Gosselies and her son Ebale.

III.—Wedric may be looked upon as the founder of the library at Liessies. To unite his religious by one more bond of sympathy, he put a numerous collection of excellent books at their disposal. Himself a learned man, he invited writers, chanters, men who had made themselves remarkable by their virtues, to Liessies, from all parts of Hainault. His reputation for knowledge and sanctity attracted numerous illustrious visitors to him. He was named Abbot of St. Waast d'Arras, in 1147.

IV.—Tiescelin, whom J. Lespée qualifies as a

gentle and modest personage, was too docile in following the counsels of a dangerous relative, and "leant upon a staff," says the chronicler, "which pierced his hand"; he proved himself unequal to his duties, and was forced to resign in 1153.

V.—Helgot, a monk of Lagny, in the diocese of Paris, and belonging to a family of importance of the territory of Avesnes. Liessies was at that time in a deplorable state, which the new Abbot was unable to remedy. After having been thirty-three years Abbot he retired, partly of his own accord, partly by order of the Archbishop of Rheims. It was in his time that the Priory of Dompierre was annexed to Liessies, in the year 1160.

VI.—Simon. Helgot, on resigning, got for his successor Simon, Prior of Lagny, to whom he was bound by ties of friendship. He, in his turn, was deposed at the end of three years and five months, in 1194.

VII.—Hugues, a monk of St. Waast d'Arras, whose prelacy only lasted three months, "as," says the chronicler, "he wished to exchange the monastic possessions: "*quia hereditates ecclesiæ, ut volebat, transmutare non potuit*".

VIII.—Hugues of Hestrud received a gift of precious relics from the Emperor Henry, which were brought by a brother of the name of Thomas,

who was sacristan of Liessies, from Constantinople in 1208. Hugh died on the 3rd of August, 1213.

IX.—Gossuin de Hestrud retired of his own accord in 1217. This is all that is known of him.

X.—Pierre d'Avesnes was eight years Abbot. A note of hand of his, stating that Gautier d'Antoing and his sister Alix had secured the possession of the Serfs of Frasnes to the Abbey of Liessies, is handed down to us. His death is recorded on the 21st of November, but of what year is unknown (1225 ?).

XI.—Thomas de Walcourt—the same who, in 1208, brought back the relics presented by the Emperor Henry to Liessies. This Abbot, after being three years in office, resigned his dignities in order to assume the humble rank of a Cistercian monk in the Abbey of Foigny, in the diocese of Laon.

XII.—Sigard governed the Abbey during six years. After his resignation the office was vacant for eighteen months.

XIII.—Gauthier de Grart, Abbot of Maroilles, was appointed by Godefroi de Fontaines, Bishop of Cambray, to the charge of Liessies in 1233, a charge which he occupied till his death on the 5th of January, 1234.

XIV.—Nicholas de Hestrud. Among the charters which are handed down to us as his, we see one of

the month of February, 1236, which regulates the meals taken by the monks, in conformity with a decree issued in the same year by the Bishop of Cambray. Nicholas died in 1244.

XV.—Hugues de Liessies, whose rule lasted till 1264, restored various possessions and privileges to the use of the Abbey of which it had been despoiled in the territories of Cartignies, Trelon, St. Hilaire, Esclaibes, and Flourties. He was one of the arbiters who were commissioned to pronounce upon the legitimacy of Jean and Baudoin d'Avesnes.

XVI.—Baudoin de Thuin. He was first a monk of this house, then Abbot of St. André du Cateau, and then appointed to Liessies, from whence he was deposed by sentence of Enguerran, Bishop of Cambray, in 1275, after having held the office of Abbot in the latter place for thirteen years and two months.

XVII.—Maurice de Rumigny, who was also Abbot of Maroilles, governed Liessies until his death on the 15th of December, 1303. In the archives of the Chapter of Cambray there exists two charters of the month of December, 1278, by which this Abbot declares his house bound to furnish the said Chapter with ten measures of wheat and ten measures of oats, payable on the lands of Fontaine-Merimont (Fontaine-au-Tertre).

J. Lespée, the chronicler, praises Maurice for having cancelled the debts upon the monastery, and for having built the Castle of Liessies as well as other edifices.

XVIII.—Michael d'Angres. All that is known of him is that before being Abbot he was Prior, and that he died on the 19th of November, 1316.

XIX.—Otho de Sanzelles held the abbatial crosier for fourteen years. It was in his time that the Lords of Gosselin, Jean and Godefroi de Marbais, renounced their pretensions to the Priory of Sart-les-Moines.

XX.—Jean de la Haye, ex-monk of St. Guislain, was deposed, after being seventeen months in office, 1332.

XXI.—Maurice, surnamed Paganus, was Abbot for even a shorter time, *i.e.*, from November to January, 1333, at which time he was deposed.

XXII.—Sicard de Cardillac, a worthy gentleman and a clever lawyer. In 1334, he swore, and made his monks swear, never to alienate, or allow others to alienate, any possessions belonging to the monastery. He assigned in November, 1359, the revenue of meadow-lands at Papeleu, given by Pierre de Becond, and of a garden situated at Liessies, to provide for the particular and unforeseen necessities of his brethren. He died on the 3rd of November, 1363.

XXIII.—Jacques . . . from 1363 to 1368.

XXIV.—Pierre de Ghislenghien, elected in 1368, died in 1378.

XXV.—Arnoul du Chesne—1378-1385.

XXVI.—Jean d'Ostrignies. He died in 1405.

XXVII.—Gilles dou Caisne, or de Chesne, 1405. M. Leglay has discovered a deed of June the 1st, 1434, passed over by the author of the "Gallia Christiana," which proves that Gilles de Chesne resigned his crosier in 1433.

XXVIII.—Jean le Moytuvier, surnamed de Loc or le Loive, died on the 20th of July, 1439. The first document coming from him is a commission of bailiff of Liessies, by which Moreau de Bousenton, squire, supersedes Guillaume de Locon (15th of January, 1386).

XXIX.—Anselm de Sars, possibly the son of a knight of the same name—Anselm de Sars, mentioned by Froissard in the year 1386.

After the death of J. le Moytuvier, the Religious had elected a member of their own community, named Thomas Bouqueau or Bouqueniau. But the Duke of Burgundy, favouring the Provost of St. Amand, A. de Sars, caused him to be received and installed notwithstanding their opposition.

It appears that the monastery offered some resistance to this nomination, and that Dom Bou-

queniau did not give up without a struggle; for I see letters, bearing the date of September 1st, 1439, whereby the Duke Philip orders the Grand Bailiff of Hainault to make inquiries as to the cause of the Prior and monks of Liessies refusing to recognise the said Anselm, and, having seen to the lawfulness of the nomination, to see it carried into effect. Further letters from the Duke, bearing the date of the 2nd of May, 1441, show that, considering the insubordination of T. Bouqueniau, he orders his justiciaries to make him return to his duty. Anselm de Sars died in 1461.

XXX.—Jean Baccart, previously Prior of Dompierre. We have seen before that the Duke Charles, who, like his father, carried his love of domineering even into the cloister, invited this Abbot to give up his dignities to Louis de Dinteville. The following letter of his is preserved in the Lille Archives, under date of the 11th of July, 1474 (original)[1]:—

"Charles, duc de Bourgogne, etc. Révérend père en Dieu, très-chier et féal conseiller. Pour ce que par cy devant et souvent effois avons été fort requis et pressé d'aucuns nos espéciaux serviteurs et autres, vous escrire et requérir de résigner votre abbaye

[1] The following letters—which would lose much by translation—will, we think, have more interest for the reader in the curious old French in which they were originally composed. (Trans.)

par permutation, résignation ou aultrement, à la requête desquels n'avons obtempéré, parce que aulcuns n'étaient de votre profession ou habit, et les autres tendaient l'avoir et tenir en commande, ce que nullement n'avons eu agréable à la persuasion de votre dite église et abbaye. Et en regard esdites requestes et meismement ès prudences, vertus et mérites que savons estre en la personne de nostre bien aimé en Dieu, frère Loys de Dinteville, religieux de votre ordene et habit et dont vous et vostre dite église polriés estre servis, portés et défendus, lequel tant en ceste cause que en considération des grands et continuels services que nous font journellement ses parents, nos espéciaux serviteurs, nous avons en singulière recommandation et désirons sa promotion et advancement en votre siége et dignité abbatial, nous envoions présentement par devers vous ce porteur nôtre serviteur.

" Et vous prions et requerons tant et si affectueusement que faire pouvons que, en notre faveur et contemplation, en regard et considération à ce que dit est ; et mesmement que aultres fois nous sommes déportés d'entendre aux requestes et poursuites faites envers nous pour mettre nostre dite église et abbaye en commande ; (ce que n'avons voulu premettre ne souffrir) vous vouliez bailler et

résigner audit frère Loys votre abbaye par permultation, résignation ou autrement, à l'advantage, seurté et profit de vous et de votre dite église, le mieux que possible vous sera et en besonger avec lui en la faction que le désirons et qu'il puist parvenir désormais à la dite promotion. Faisant cesser toutes les aultres requêtes en ceste matière et demeurer la dite église en son entier, adjoutant foi à ce que vous en sera dit de par nous par notre ainé et féal conseiller et chambellan, le sire de Moullembaix[1] auquel escript vous de en parler et communiquer avec vous.

"Si voulez sur le tout nous faire réponse par escript, par ce dit porteur, telle et si bonne que puission congnaître que avec désir de nous complaire et obtempérer à nous et à nostre requête en ceste partie.

"En quoy faisant, nous ferez très-singulier et agréable plaisir, lequel recognoistrons envers vous et vostre dite église quant d'aulcune cause nous requerrez que faire puissions. Révérend père en Dieu, très-chier et féal conseiller, nostre Seigneur soit garde à vous.

"Escript en nostre ville de Malines.—Signé CHARLES, et plus bas, N. KEWSTIN."

Jean Baccart answered the Duke in the following

[1] De Lannoy-Molembaix.

terms, in which, whilst standing up for his rights, he maintains the respect due to his princely antagonist. (November the 20th, 1474) :—

" Mon très-redouté et souverain seigneur, tant et si humblement que plus que je puis je me recommande en votre bonne grâce. Et vous plaise savoir, mon très-redoubté et souverain seigneur, que puis certain temps en ça il vous a pleu moy envoyer vos très-nobles lettres, afin que me voulsisse déporter de mon église et abbaye et le résiner au proufit de frère Loys de Dinteville, frère de Jacques votre escuier de chambre, auquel Loys je respondis et fis respondre que je n'étais point en vouloir ni intention de résiner ma dite église. Depuis il a pleu à mon très-honoré et très-redoubté seigneur, monseigneur le chancelier, moy mander par devers lui en vostre ville de Malines, lequel m'a fait semblables requestes de vostre part comme dessus. Et combien que j'aye très-humblement supplié à mon dit sire le chancelier qu'il me voulsit de ce tenir pour excusé, lequel comme j'espoire, il a considéré mon cas, c'est à ce pour pitié et honneur libéralement condescendu.

" Toutes voies pour ce que je ne me suis encoire à ce voulu condescendre aulcuns se sont ingérés de dire et faire courir la voix que par vostre moyen ils mectront et feront mettre hors de ma gouvernance et en vostre main le temporel de ma dicte abbaye.

Et pour ce, mon très-redoubté et souverain seigneur, que je say que à ung chacun voulez raison et justice estre faicte et administrée, et que se oncques je me mis en peine de bien gouverner ma dicte abbaye maintenant est le temps que je y doy, et en l'augmentacion du service divin persévérer de bien en mieux, comme je le désire de tout mon cœur. Je vous supplie tant et si très-humblement que je puis que votre très-noble plaisir soit, actendu l'âge de soixante ans ou environ que j'ai à présent et l'espace de vingt ans que j'ai déjà gouverné ma dicte abbaye, d'estre content que je puisse dorénavant paisiblement gouverner icelle au mieulx que possible me sera, actendu mesmement que je n'entends point avoir fait chose pour laquelle j'en deus estre privé, mais toujours comme tenu y suis avesque les aultres prélats de vostre pays, me suis employé délibéralement vous octroyer vos aides et d'en payer ma part et portion. Et pour les causes dictes ordonner audit frère Loys et aux aultres entremetteurs de ses besoignes et affaires qu'ils s'en déportent de plus pour ne me molester ou travailler, ne faire ou souffrir faire depense inde à ma dite église et abbaye. En ce faisant, avec ce que comme j'espoire vous ne souffrirez me faire pis que ne fut oncques fait à aulcuns de vos subjects, je prierai Dieu très-dévotement pour vous et pour vostre très-noble prospérité.

"Vostre très-humble et très-obéissant serviteur-chapellain et orateur, Jehan, abbé de Liessies."

To the firmness and resoluteness of character of which he then gave proof, Jean Baccart added also administrative ability, and great love of the Fine Arts. Some good paintings, with which he adorned his church, were in existence till quite lately. If, as the authors of the "Gallia Christiana" aver, he died in 1675, it must have been after the 11th of November of that year, since I possess some papers of this date, in which he confers upon Guillaume de Flandres the charge of forester of the woods of Fourmies.

XXXI.—Léger du Pont, previously provost of Liessies. Jean Lespée characterised him in the following terms:—"A man of extremely unassuming character, wise and prudent in all his actions, generous in his charities, kind to those in misfortune. Thus, he was held in special affection by both rich and poor. These excellent qualities caused him to be surnamed 'The Good Abbot'." Léger du Pont died at Ath on the 14th of February, 1496; his body, however, was brought back to Liessies to be buried there.

XXXII.—Bauduin Maubrueck was only two years and a half abbot, as his death is recorded upon the 8th of August, 1499. J. Lespée describes him

as "*Vir summa eruditione præstans*". I must acknowledge that I have sought in vain for any proofs of this erudition.

XXXIII.—Gilles Gippus; he died in 1530.

XXXIV.—Louis de Blois.

XXXV.—Quirin Douillet; he was born at Ath, and succeeded to Louis de Blois. He was appointed in September, 1570, together with Mathurin Moulart, Abbot of St. Guislain, to conduct Anna-Maria of Austria, Philip the II.'s fourth wife, to Spain. The two abbots took the place of the Archbishop of Cambray (Maximilian de Berghes) in this mission, he having died at Bergen-op-Zoom, where he had gone to receive the princess. The plains of Hainault being much disturbed in March, 1578, by bands of soldiery, the Abbot of Liessies saw himself forced to seek a stronger place of refuge in the monastery of St André du Cateau. He died there on the 26th of the following April.

XXXVI.—Nicolas le Francq. If the life, in Latin, of this Abbot—which I have had the good fortune to find—had not lost its opening chapters, I should doubtless have gathered the necessary dates, which are at present missing, upon the subject of his birthplace, and the early history of his religious life. The individuals, whose regard and admiration for Nicolas le Francq are specially men-

tioned, are Guillaume de Berghes, Archbishop of Cambray, and the Count and Countess of Solre. The good abbot, being strongly opposed to intemperance, had put down in his community the custom of drinking healths, a custom which so easily led to abuse. One day the Archbishop, Guillaume de Berghes, was dining at Liessies. Towards the end of dinner, one of the Canons, who accompanied him, proposed drinking the health of His Grace, the said Canon having a sickly, miserable countenance, whilst, on the other hand, that of the Archbishop beamed with health and vigour. "M. le Chanoine," said our Abbot, with a smile, "it appears to me that instead of drinking to the health of the Archbishop, which is excellent, you would do better to drink to your own, which strikes me as not being so good." This sally was greeted with much laughter by all, except the Canon.

XXXVII.—Antoine de Winghe came of a noble family, was born at Louvain on the 17th of July, 1562, was professed at Liessies on the 30th of April, 1591, and invested with the abbatial dignity on the 2nd of September, 1610. The abbey accounts prove that he exercised the important functions of Procurator from the year 1598. Bollandus places a panegyric upon him at the beginning of his "Acta Sanctorum". A friend of the Fine Arts, he corres-

ponded with Theodore Galle, of Antwerp, who, like his father, Philippe Galle, was a celebrated engraver. Antoine de Winghe, though his name has been passed over without mention by all the biographers, was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable men which the Monastery of Liessies has produced. He died at Mons in 1637, and was buried in the Jesuit Church there, where Van-der-Burck, Archbishop of Cambray, directed that his own body should also be laid, so that he might repose near one who in life had been his dearest friend.

XXXVIII.—Thomas Luytens belonged to a family which still occupies a considerable position in Flanders. When only Superior at Liessies he wrote a life of St. Dodon, Abbot of Wallers (see Act. SS., 29th of October), for Bollandus. It was to him that, later on, the celebrated head of the Bollandists dedicated the first volume of their immortal collection. During his short prelacy, Luytens obtained for himself and his successors the right of wearing the mitre. He died in 1644.

XXXIX.—Gaspard Rogier or Roger celebrated, in 1645, a centenary jubilee, commemorative of the Reform effected by Louis de Blois at Liessies. I observe in the accounts belonging to this period that, in virtue of a royal brief of the year 1646, Julius Chifflet, Chancellor of the Golden Fleece, was in

receipt of an annual life-pension of a thousand livres, payable on the abbey lands. I have found among the documents relating to Gaspard Roger's prelacy an original bull of Pope Alexander VII., dated the 14th of November, 1656, which appears to have been addressed erroneously to the Abbey of Liessies from a mistake arising from a similarity of names. The officials belonging to the Roman Chancery appear to have confounded this Benedictine monastery of ours with an Irish house of the Cistercian Order of the name of *Liesca Vallis*, in the diocese of Kildare. The Pope confers the said Abbey on Patrick Dempsius who, in the absence of his bulls, must have found some difficulty in assuming possession of his dignities. Gaspard Roger died in 1660.

XL.—François le Louchier figures as Procurator of the Abbey as early as the year 1655. It was from his hands that Mabillon received the Life of St. Hiltrude, which dated probably from the eleventh century. It would appear from a little journal kept by M. Mauroy, the Curé of Dompierre at that period, that he was elected in the commencement of the year 1665. His death must, we think, have taken place in 1678. The Louchier-de-Popieules family bore speaking shields: three *louches d'or sable.* (Louche signifies spoons from

the word in dog-latin *lochea.*) This Abbot obtained letters patent from Philip IV., King of Spain, bearing the date of October the 7th, 1662, securing the right of opening the games on the feast of the Dedication of the town to the Mayor of Sart-les-Moines.

XLI.—Lambert Bouillon. We are in possession of letters stating that he had been occupied with the affairs of the monastery, either as Procurator or in other capacities, since 1666. Lambert Bouillon had been seventeen years Abbot, when Fénelon was appointed to the Archbishopric of Cambray. The Abbey of Liessies was not equal then, either in point of discipline or good example, to what it had been in the days of Louis de Blois, of Antoine de Winghe, and of others. Lambert Bouillon was expensive in his tastes, and exhausted the monastery exchequer with lawsuits, and with building and embellishing expenses. He had also a considerable number of nephews and nieces whom he endeavoured to provide for, without being too particular as to the means. These diverse abuses, after being long palliated came, at last, to the knowledge of the Archbishop, who was at once moved to see to it himself, and, accordingly, early in January of 1702, he made a pastoral visitation of the monastery, accompanied by M. de Bernières, Governor of the

Province. This wise prelate then ascertained the truth of certain irregularities, and laid down rules by which they were to be redressed; but, aware that it was also highly necessary to maintain the respect due to the Abbot by the religious, already too much disposed to insubordination, he addressed them before his departure in severe terms whereby, while carefully shielding the superiors, he endeavoured to bring back their subjects to a sense of the duties of monastic obedience.

Fénelon has himself given an account of this visit:—

"I imagine that the Abbot of Liessies has not failed to change his Prior and Sacristan, and to name three wardens for the community, as he promised me he would do, directly after my departure. You are aware, sir, that all I did was to administer a reproof to the community in full chapter, and to read them a severe lecture upon the obedience they owe to their Abbot. If the Abbot has not made haste to soften a conclusion which was very hard upon them, by making an immediate change of those in office, the community will have been put to a very severe trial. It will appear to them as if the Abbot had my authority even for all kinds of irregularities. But I trust that the Abbot will have not only made his promised changes, but also cer-

tain friendly advances to attract to him the hearts of his people." (Letter to M. de Bernières, of the 6th January, 1702.)

The Abbot, however, encouraged by the Archbishop's indulgent words, turned them into a source of triumph to himself. In concert with this same Prior, whose dismissal from office was specially stipulated for, he re-wrote the discourse preached before his departure by the Archbishop, in words suited to his own ends, had it declared authentic by seven or eight Religious who were devoted to him, and gave it through the medium of the press to the general public. This allocution, dressed up in such a fashion, necessarily displayed two forms of error. In the first place, the praises bestowed upon the Abbot, and the censure on the monks, are amplified and exaggerated with perfect composure. In the second, we can easily guess the complete transformation of language, in a literary point of view, from the pure academic style of the author of Telemacus to that of the Prior Florence Genard.

The following is a specimen of this fine harangue :—

"Is it necessary to interrupt a Bishop, and to keep him occupied with your triflings, and your squabblings (vos vetilles et de vos anticailles), when

he has to watch over and take care of an entire diocese, besides having to study the works of the Fathers? Let there be no more of these amusements, and these trifles; I will not suffer them to go on any longer. Do not think that I wish to maintain you in your bitter zeal, which springs oftenest from a certain acidity of temper, the result of absence of application of mind, and disgust of holy things."

This fictitious sermon was laid before Fenelon, who, in several letters, complained, with great cause, that he had been made to utter ridiculous, incorrect, and feigned words. "The Abbot of Liessies has published, in very bad faith, a printed paper, in which he puts the most absurd language into my mouth. I have, however, preferred leaving this ridiculous publication alone, though made contrary to good faith and to the respect due to my character, rather than to give it a public disavowal, which would have hopelessly dishonoured him." (Letter dated April 11, 1705.)

The printed copy of this composition of Lambert Bouillon is no longer in existence, or at least is so rare as to be much in request by collectors of rare books. I have lately discovered the original document, written in the handwriting of the Prior, and signed—Florent Genard, Thomas Lepez, Maxi-

milian Marchand, Humbert Duclin, Amand Lambert, Agapit Dambrinne, Guillaume Fontaine, Hubert Gossuin, and Joseph Billoez. The good monks, who did not understand its full malice, may perhaps have put their signatures to it in good faith, but the behaviour of the Abbot and Prior is certainly inexcusable. (These details are taken from the "Inventory of the Liessies and Maroilles Archives," by Dr. Leglay—a rare work, for which I am indebted to the kindness of M. l'Abbé Dehaisne). Lambert Bouillon was attacked towards the end of his life by mental infirmities, which rendered a coadjutor necessary. He died in 1708.

XLII.—Agapit Dambrinne, who, at Whitsunday, 1708, had been appointed coadjutor by the King, became at once Titular Abbot on the death of his predecessor. The Père la Chaise wrote to him on the subject of his nomination in the following terms:—"Your merits and zeal for orthodoxy have obliged the King to give you the preference over numbers of others who have solicited this place of His Majesty, which he now bestows upon you. I feel sure you will worthily fulfil its duties, and that you will maintain proper discipline and good order in a monastery of such importance. All our Fathers, whom you have honoured with your friendship, have made me their congratulations

on the subject, which has given me true pleasure. May I beg of you to preserve that esteem and consideration for them which you have ever manifested, and believe me to be, etc." Dom Dambrinne died at Liessies on the 6th of March, 1740, at the age of seventy-four.

XLIII.—Augustin Fourdin. Dom Dambrinne having, in 1730, asked for a coadjutor, the King conferred this favour upon Dom Augustin Fourdin, who, having been born at Lessines, in the Austrian Netherlands, was obliged to ask for letters of naturalisation. These letters, delivered at Versailles in March, 1730, were registered, on the 17th of August following, by the Parliament of Douay. The election made by the community only took place on the 23rd of October, 1731. Dom Fourdin was installed on the 10th of March, 1740, by Philip de la Samine, the Abbot of Maroilles. I have not been able to discover the exact date of his death, but a letter of condolence, dated 27th January, 1755, which was addressed by J. P. Strivenart, President of the Seminary of Notre-Dame-de-la-Foi, to the Procurator of the Abbey, proves that his death was at that time quite recent.

XLIV.—Max L'Homme was guardian and procurator of the monastery in 1737. His warrant of nomination to the abbatial dignity bears the date

of the 2nd of March, 1755, with an accompaniment of tolerably heavy pensions to various individuals.

The last deed in which this Abbot is mentioned as still living is dated the 30th of June, 1763. In another of the 28th of September of the same year the office is declared vacant. The Parliament of Flanders had appointed Dom Louis Lebeau, the sub-Prior, Lambert le Francq, Aubert Georges, and Dom Maximilian Brousse, to manage the temporalities during the vacancy.

XLV.—Gregory Dupire. He was named Abbot by a Royal Commission, dated the 26th October, 1763. His name ceases to figure on the deeds from the month of March, 1772.

XLVI.—Cardinal Etienne-René Potier de Gesvres, former Bishop of Beauvais, was appointed Abbot *in commendam* by a warrant of March the 22nd, 1772, and received by this right a net pension of 25,000 livres. He died on the 24th of July, 1774.

XLVII.—Michel Lelong. He qualified himself during Cardinal de Gesvres' administration first as Grand Prior, then as coadjutor to the Abbot of Liessies. He was consecrated Abbot by the Bishop of Amycla on the 6th of September, 1774.

XLVIII.—Marc Verdier. His brief of nomination is dated on the 29th of December, 1776; he

was still alive and holding office at the time of the suppression of religious Orders in France. These are the terms in which his declaration was made, in the paper drawn up on the 28th of January, 1791, by the municipal authorities of Liessies, in order to ascertain the wishes and intention of all the religious, in conformity with the decree of the 14th of October, 1790:

Dom Marc Verdier, Abbot of the said Abbey, born the 20th of April, 1733, and professed the 8th of September, 1753, protests that he desires as long as it is in his power to observe in the said house the vows he has made to God, and the Rule which he has embraced, with the authority of the Church and the protection of the Government. In testimony of which he signs himself.

NOTE III.

BULL CONFIRMING THE STATUTES OF LIESSIES.

Copia Bullæ Pauli tertii approbantis statuta quæ R. D. Ludovicus Blosius, abbas Letiensis, condidit pro reformatione sui monasterii.—Bulla summi Pontificis Pauli tertij continens confirmationem modi vivendi, sive statutorum et quorumdam privilegiorum monasterij Letiensis.

PAULUS EPISCOPUS, servus servorum Dei, ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Alto divinæ providentiæ consilio summi sacerdotij curam, meritis licet imparibus, gerentes in terris, ad universa monasteria et alia regularia loca, pro illorum felici statu confovendo nostræ vigilantiæ mentem frequenter dirigimus, et his quæ pro religionis puritate retinenda, et divini cultus candore conservando, nec non scismatum dissidijs propulsandis, provida consideratione et matura deliberatione processisse comperimus. Ut inconcussa soliditate roborentur libenter cum a nobis petitur apostolici manumissis adjicimus firmitatem, alias que desuper statuimus et ordinamus, pro ut

temporum et locorum qualitate pensata in Domino conspicimus salubriter expedire.

Sane pro parte dilecti filij moderni Abbatis monasterij de Liessies, ordinis Sancti Benedicti, Cameracensis diocesis, nobis nuper exhibita petitio continebat, quod licet in dicto monasterio regularia instituta ejusdem Sancti Benedicti (secundum quæ monachi ipsius monasterij professionem faciunt) ad Dei honorem vigeant, et tam ex statutis ejusdem monasterij, ac antiqua et approbata, hactenusque inibi observata consuetudine quam forsan ex privilegiis et indultis apostolicis prefato monrio[1] aliquando concessis, infrascriptus vivendi modus, quoad pro tempore existentes abbatem et monachos ac alias personas ipsius monrii sit in usu et vendi observantia, nihilominus prefatus modernus abbas pro majori conscientiæ suæ serenitate, et ne presenti quo hereses multis in locis nedum pullulant, sed etiam latius serpunt, et refrigescente charitate abundat iniquitas aut alio unquam tempore in eodem monrio spreta religionis puritate, aliqua minus honesta introducantur, cupit eumdem vivendi modum in scriptis redactum, sub hujus modi tenore, videlicet:

1. Circa divinum servitium et cultum quilibet monachorum debet adhibere precipuam diligentiam

[1] Monasterio.

officium magnarum sive canonicarum horarum dicitur juxta regulæ ordinanem[1]; officium vero parvarum horarum B. Mariæ (de quo in institutis regularibus sancti benedicti nulla fit mentio) dicitur hoc modo. Ante nocturnum, primam, tertiam, sextam, nonam, vesperas et completorium ejusdem officii legitur semel integra salutatio angelica. Ad nocturnum post versus initiales dicitur invitatorium, Hymnus, psalmus, antiphona, versiculus, benedictio, et tres lectiones cum tribus responsoriis. Ad laudes et vesperas post versus initiales dicitur psalmus, antiphona, capitulum, responsorium breve, hymnus, versiculus, canticum de Evangelio, ana[2] cantici et collecta. Ad primam, tertiam, sextam et nonam, post versus initiales dicitur hymnus, psalmus, ana, capitulum, versiculus et collecta. Ad completorium post versus initiales dicitur psalmus, hymnus, capitulum, versiculus, canticum de Evangelio, ana cantici et collecta. Ipse psalmus ubique est unus et idem, videlicet: Laudate Dominum omnes gentes. Quotidie ad finem laudum et vesperarum ejusdem officii beatæ Dei genitricis, non autem ad finem laudum et vesperarum officii canonici, sit commemorao[3] de patronis et omnibus sanctis. Post ultimam collectam cujuslibet horæ dicto benedicamus Domino Deo graas, additur pro defunctis hec pre-

[1] Ordinationem. [2] Antiphona. [3] Commemorationem.

catio: Fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace, amen. Tam officium parvarum horarum sanctæ Dei genitricis, quam officium magnarum sive canonicarum horarum a singulis professis quotidie legi debet, nisi infirmitas vel alia necessitas impediat. Venientes ad congregaem,[1] ut sacræ religionis ordinem assumant, undecumque obligati fuerint legere horas canonicas vel parvas horas B. Mariæ, possunt, ordinario suo relicto, mox congregais[2] ordinarium sequi, et eo uti quamdiu illic perstiterint. In festivitatibus illorum sanctorum de quibus proprium officium in choro agitur, si hi qui privatim complent divinum officium, non habent in libris suis propria, quæ in choro dicuntur, possunt ex communi sanctorum assumere communia, necessaria et convenientia.

2. Feria quinta in cœna Dni,[3] et duobus diebus sequentibus, vesperæ canonicæ dicuntur ante prandium. Per alias ferias quadgsimæ ne infirmiores seu imperfectiores monachi prolixum temporis pomeridiani spatium non satis utiliter expendant, pro manifesta utilitate animarum dicuntur in conventu hora alias consueta post prandium. Sed vesperæ horarum B. Mariæ virginis a prima dominica quadragesimæ usque ad feriam quintam cœnæ Dni omnibus diebus non Dncis[4] leguntur ante pran-

[1] Congregationem. [2] Congregationes. [3] Domini. [4] Dominicis.

dium conventualiter, cum tamen alias nihil ex officio earumdem parvarum horarum intemeratæ Dei genitricis in choro conventualiter dici soleat, sed quilibet professorum illud privatim persolvat.

3. Vigiliæ mortuorum cum tribus lectionibus dicuntur conventualiter singulis mensibus semel: videlicet in januario pro abbatibus defunctis: in februario, maio, augusto et octobri pro spiritualibus congregaois,[1] totiusque ordinis fratribus et socitibus: in martio, junio, septembri et decembri pro benefactoribus: in aprili, pro fundatoribus, in julio pro parentibus: in novembri dicuntur ipsæ vigiliæ defunctoriales cum novem lectionibus, quando religiosus monasterij professus, vel etiam solummodo investitus moritur. Quando autem professi naturalis pater vel mater moritur, dicuntur vigiliæ defunctoriales cum tribus lectionibus. Quando vero novitius conventualis nondum investitus, aut famulus conventualis regulari disciplinæ competenter subditus, moritur, dicuntur vesperæ defunctoriales cum collecta seu collectis convenientibus. Rursum transacto anno a morte professi vel investiti dicuntur vigiliæ defunctorum cum tribus lectionibus. Sed et quandocumque abbas jubet ut ipsæ vigiliæ defunctorum vel cum tribus lectionibus, vel etiam solæ earumdem vesperæ pro aliquo defuncto, fautore,

[1] Congregationis.

benefactore, familiari, seu alias specialiter juncto dicantur, dici debent. Verumtamen qui privatim legunt horas canonicas, non censentur obligati legere vigilias mortuorum nisi de mense, et pro professo vel investito defuncto. Et quidem tunc legere tenentur tantummodò vesperas ipsius officii defunctorialis cum collecta seu collectis convenientibus, preterquam in initio novembris ad generalem commemorationem animarum. Ad quam legunt vigilias cum novem lectionibus, sicut in conventu dicuntur. Porro quandocumque vigiliæ defunctoriales vel etiam earumdem solæ vesperæ dicuntur in conventu, cantari debet die sequenti missa defunctorialis pro eo seu eis, pro quo vel quibus ipsæ vigiliæ seu vesperæ defunctoriales fuerunt dictæ.

4. Durante tricenario professi vel investiti defuncti legitur quotidie in conventu pro eo preter missam etiam supplicatio defunctorialis, id est psalmus de profundis, orao dnica [1] et collecta Inclina, etc : quæ tamen supplicao omitti pt [2] ab his qui privatim legunt horas.

5. Etiam quando moritur monachus professus de gremio congregaois, quilibet sacerdos decies missam pro eo celebrare debet, si celebrare potest. Hi qui non sunt sacerdotes, tam professi, quam non professi, et famuli conventuales, ac sacerdotes celebrare non

[1] Oratio dominica. [2] Potest.

valentes, loco prædictarum decem missarum persolvere singuli habent decies trinam orationem dominicam, nisi infirmitate impediantur. Quando vero nondum professus, sed tamen investitus moritur, quilibet sacerdotum ter missam pro eo celebrare debet: alii conventuales non sacerdotes ac sacerdotes celebrare non valentes dicere singuli habent ter trinam oraoem dnicam. Quando autem novitius nondum investitus, vel famulus conventualis moritur, quilibet sacerdos celebrare debet semel missam pro eo: alii conventuales non sacerdotes ac sacerdotes celebrare non valentes, legere debent singuli trinam oraoem dnicam. Alias oraoes pro conventuali defuncto quilibet in particulari citra aliquam obligaoem facit secundum suam devotionem.

6. Feria quarta cinerum et tribus diebus proxime sequentibus, legitur in conventu quartus psalmus penitentialis: Miserere mei Deus, cum ana,[1] ne reminiscaris. Dominica prima quadragesimæ legitur primus psalmus penitentialis: feria secunda sequente secundus: feria tertia tertius: feria quarta quartus; feria quinta quintus; feria sexta sextus; et sabato septimus. Atque ita deinceps usque ad dominicam palmarum singulis septimanis septem psalmi penitentiales per ordinem complentur, quotidie unum assumendo: et semper ad finem psalmi

[1] Antiphona.

adjicitur predicta ana: ne reminiscaris. Etiam diebus litaniarum simili modo legitur psalmus: Miserere mei Deus, cum eadem ana: Et quidem in die cinerum ac deinceps usque ad Dominicam palmarum, secundis, quartis et sextis feriis, statim post anam[1] ne reminiscaris, adjungitur litania, nisi in illis feriis, occurrat festum duodecim lectionum: tunc enim omittitur litania. Diebus litaniarum post antiphonam: ne reminiscaris, omnino subjungitur litania etiam si forte tunc celebretur festum duodecim lectionum.

Circa infirmum oleo sacro inungendum inter alias orationes legitur etiam specialiter psalmus penitentialis: Miserere mei Deus, cum ana: cor contritum, et cum litania. Sed ipsa litania tunc dicitur solummodo usque ad hæc verba; propitius esto. Qui privatim legunt horas, ipsi quotidie a capite jejunii quadragesimalis, usque ad dnicam palmarum, et diebus litaniarum dicunt psalmum penitentialem cum ana: ne reminiscaris, sicut in conventu legitur, sed omittere possunt litaniam.

7. Sacerdotes missam celebraturi, legunt ante ipsam anam: Veni sancte spiritus, cum versiculo et collecta de sancto spiritu. Post missam, finito evangelio: In principio erat verbum, dicunt versiculum: Ostende nobis Dne misericordiam tuam

[1] Antiphonam.

cum collecta: omnipotens sempiterne Deus dirige actus nros[1] etc. Alias preparaoes et graarum actiones ante et post missam faciunt pro sua devotione. Dominica in palmis et tertia, quartaque feria sequente, privatim celebrantes possunt loco integræ passionis, quæ in conventu cantatur, legere hæc verba sancti Evangelii secundum Mattheum: In illo tempore dixit Jesus discipulis suis, filius hominis tradetur principibus sacerdotum et scribis, et condemnabunt eum morte, et tradent eum gentibus ad illudendum et flagellandum, et crucifigendum, et tertia die resurget. In die tamen palmarum, si volunt legere Evangelium: Cum appropinquaret Jesus Jerosolymis, possunt legere. In natalitiis patronorum Ecclesiæ. Credo dicitur ad missas patronorum eorumdem. Dicitur etiam in solemnibus missis professionum, primitiarum ac benedictionis abbatis. Qui privatim celebrant missam de sanctis, si officium non habetur suo loco integrum, sed requirendum est, possunt ad evitandam distractionem assumere officium ex communi sanctorum, quod visum fuerit convenire.

8. Licitum est monachis, et licitum esse creditur aliis quoque sacerdotibus de eorum familia existentibus celebrare missas super tabellas lapideas consecratas, seu altaria portatilia in locis honestis

[1] Nostros.

et convenientibus. Tempore hyemali celebrant missas etiam ante lucem diei, sed et quovis tempore ex causa honesta vel rationabili, missam celebrare possunt antequam elucescat dies circa diurnam lucem.

9. Monachi sacerdotes in monasterio constituti abstinere a celebraone missæ ultra tres dies continuos non debent, absque superioris scitu et permissione, nisi forte infirmitate manifesta detineantur. Sed nec uno quidem die aliquis sacerdos in monasterió a celebratione cessare debet absque caa [1] rationabili. Novitii et monachi non constituti in sacris ordinibus communicare debent in oibus [2] solemnitatibus summis, et in prima dominica adventus Dni, atque in prima ac quarta Dnca quadragesimæ, et in tribus ultimis diebus hebdomadæ sanctæ, nisi propter eorum ætatem minus congruam aut propter aliam causam rationabilem superior aliter ordinaverit. Qui in ordine diaconatus vel sudiaconatus, non tamen in gradu sacerdotii sunt constituti, etiam ultra dies predictas communicare debent singulis Dominicis totius anni, nisi ex legitima causa vel superioris permissione abstinere conveniat. Si aliquis ex causa rationabili a communione vel celebratione diutius cessare forte habuerit, non tamen debet nimis diu a confessione sacramentali abstinere, maxime si

[1] Causa. [2] Omnibus.

convenientis confessoris copiam habet. Valde enim expedit ut monachi frequentissime confiteantur. Sane quilibet ad celebrationem vel communionem accessionis, non debet negligere preparare se per confessionem sacramentalem: verumtamen si vel confitendi opportunitatem, vel convenientis confessoris copiam non habet, et alias se immunem a mortali noxa invenit, affectu trahente non prohibetur absque sacramentali confessione, cum pia erga Deum fiducia devote celebrare aut communicare. Novitii induci debent ad confessionem satis crebro faciendam, etiamsi communicare non habeant.

10. Famuli conventuales inter cetera religiosæ disciplinæ et piæ conversationis opera atque exercitia, istud etiam observare debent, ut intersint matutinis et sacramentaliter confiteantur, atque communicent (si legitimo impedimento non excusantur) saltem in nativitate Domini: in prima et quarta Dominica quadragesimæ: in festo paschæ; in festo ascensionis Dni; in festo Pentecostes: in festo ven. sacramenti: in festo Assumptionis B. Marie Virg: in festo omnium sanctorum; et in natalitiis principalium patronorum Ecclesiæ. Sed et si quando alias, causa vel necessitas aliqua poposcerit, ut ad communionem accedant, communicare debent confessione premissa. Et dum aliquis advenit ut in conventu pro famulo conventuali

recipiatur, priusquam serio admittatur, debet ei coram conventu religiosorum dari vel etiam legi scriptura continens principaliora que observare habebit, querere que oportet ab eo utrum paratus sit vivere secundum illa, et congruæ religionis disciplinæ subditus esse, quamdiu erit famulus conventualis. Quod si ad illorum observationem minime se paratum esse declaraverit aut ostenderit et regulari disciplinæ competenter subdi renuerit nullo modo admitti vel teneri debet pro famulo conventuali. Ipsis famulis conventualibus permittendum non est ut gestent vestimenta ad vanitatem, ineptamque curiositatem secularium aptata, sed talia gestare debent, quæ modestæ simplicitati vel honestati congruant. Tunicas eorum convenit esse coloris grisei ad fuligineum tendentis, vel coloris omnino nigri, sicut eorumdem pilei debent esse nigri.

11. Novitiis ad congregaoem venientibus ut monachi fiant et famulis conventualibus, postquam in conventum recepti fuerint, cuncta libere ministrantur sacramenta, et eorum decedentium corpora in cemiteriis monasterii sepeliuntur: censentur enim ecclesiasticæ abbatis jurisdictioni subjecti, sicut et hi qui professi sunt.

12. Vigilandum est superiori in congregaoe circa correctionem excessuum, ut in ea diligens pariter et

discretus sit, congrua satisfactionum vel penitentiarum remedia ipsis excessibus cum timore Dei et compassione, cum opus fuerit, adhibendo.

13. Religiosi et novitii ac famuli conventuales in locis conventualibus disciplinam silentii extra communium colloquiorum seu spatiamentorum tempus rationabiliter servare debent. In oratorio autem, etiam tempore colloquiorum, observanda est taciturnitas rationabilis: sed et in aliis locis regularibus et circa eodem tpre[1] colloquiorum cavendum est ab indecenti vocis exaltaoe, et qualibet irreligiose levitatis ineptia. A completorio dicto usque ad capitulare officium diei sequentis silentii rigor in ipsis locis regularibus strictius servari debet juxta sancti instituti exigentiam. Sicut autem indignum judicatur, ut monachi passim et quibuslibet horis liberam habeant loquendi facultatem, ita humana infirmitate considerata eis ad honorem Dei conceditur, ut quotidie lectione regulari post meridiem finita usque ad vesperarum canonicarum tempus liberius de rebus honestis vel utilibus loqui possint, servata in omnibus debita morum compositione. Quo etiam temporis spatio hi qui sacerdotes sunt, per hortum conventualem spatiari possunt (nisi alicui eorum a superiore interdicatur) ita tamen ut audito primo pulsu vesperarum redeant et se recolligant. Dnca

[1] Tempore.

quadragesimæ etiam in prima et deinceps usque ad calendas octobris post cœnam cum gratiarum actione completam, et diebus jejunii post vesperas seu post officium defunctorum religiosi inter se honeste colloqui, et sacerdotes quibus non fuerit specialiter interdictum, per hortum spatiari possunt usque ad primum pulsum completorii. Si tamen sunt aut jam imminent tenebrae, tempestive revocari debent a spatiamento horti, nec temere permittendum est ut ibi in tenebris permaneant. Ipsi religiosi predictam et quamlibet aliam colloquiorum seu spatiamentorum gratiam (quæ non nisi pro honore Dei conceditur) debent solerter ordinare ad religiosum animi relevamen, profectumque spiritualem, non autem ea abuti ad inhonestam dissolutionem, levitatem vel pernitiosam temporis perditionem.

14. Sollicite providendum est ne seculares nimis facile jungantur monachis. Et nec viris quidem passim et indifferenter concedi debet ingressus ad claustrum, et cætera interiora loca. Illos tantummodo oportet admittere, qui autoritate, aut compositione morum, honestaque conversatione pollere, vel speciali amicitia, notitia vel propinquitate juncti esse noscuntur, nisi aut propter processionem aliamve piam causam, aut propter edificiorum constructionem et reparationem, alteriusve operis exhibitionem aut propter manifestam necessitatem evidentemque

utilitatem aliud pro tempore fieri debeat. Mulieres ad ipsa loca conventualia admitti non debent, nisi processionis vel manifeste necessitatis caa[1] exposcat: aut nisi tantæ sint authoritatis seu honestatis et nobilitatis, vel de congregaoe tam bene meritæ, ut eis introitus videatur non denegandus. Tales igitur cum suo honesto comitatu interdum admitti possunt; nullo tamen modo eis unquam permittendum est ut regulare dormitorium ingrediantur. Nullus religiosorum caam[2] non habentium debet se illis temere adjungere. Postquam loca viderunt, educendæ sunt, nec moram nimis longam ibidem facere debent, nisi forte divinum officium intus audire permittantur (quod tamen temere quibuslibet concedi non debet) aut certe ex aliqua necessitate illic diutius esse habeant.

15. Ostia cellarum in regulari dormitorio constitutarum, seras habere et clave claudi permittuntur: sed nihil intra easdem cellas clave claudi et firmari debet, nisi forte aliquis coem[3] seu administratoriam pecuniam in cistella serata, ratione officii sibi comissi, servare habeat. Abbas et prior omnium earumdem cellarum claves habere debent, ut sæpius et quando voluerint, eas visitent, scrutiniumque faciant, ne quid ibi sit aut agatur quod monachos non deceat.

[1] Causa. [2] Causam. [3] Communem.

Ipsa quoque ostia predictarum cellularum, fenestrellam cancellatam habere debent, quam non licet cellarum incolis penitus claudere ab interiori parte, nisi caa rationabilis requirat. Monachis concedi potest coe[1] calefactorium etiam in dormitorio regulari vel juxta illud, ad corpora tempore frigoris refovenda ; in quo sicut et in aliis locis regularibus, modestia, quies et taciturnitatis vel silentii disciplina debita raoe[2] servanda est.

16. A vestimentis religiosorum omnis notabilis curiositas vanitasque secularis excludenda est : et ea aptanda componendaque sunt juxta status monastici congruitatem, ex quibus illa, quæ in aperto gestantur multumque apparent, oportet esse nigri coloris. Cucullæ et scapularia non debent fieri ex serico, nec ex bysso vel sendato, sed ex materia humiliori, videlicet ex coe illa et usitata, quæ Gallico vocabulo saya dicitur, si haberi potest. Si non potest haberi, non tamen ex materia pretiosiori fieri debent. Quilibet sub actionibus conventualibus debet esse indutus cuculla, nisi quod is qui superinduit vestimenta ecclesiastica, et is qui ad mensam conventualem servit ac dispensator exuta cuculla complent in scapulari sua ministeria. Etiam extra monasterium oportet monachos prodeuntes in publicum indutos esse

[1] Commune. [2] Ratione.

cuculla, ubi et quando res honestatis ratione id omnino exigit. Nullo modo, fas est monacho prodire in publicum ex proposito et consistere inter hoes[1] absque scapulari si cucullam non habet indutam. Nullus debet gestare in publico inter hoes scapulare absque capitio assuto aut caputio panneo superposito, propter inductionem vestimentorum ecclesiasticorum, et propter piscaoem,[2] ac propter graviorem laborem extra publicum, et propter dormitionem licet uti scapulari absque capitio. Tunica regularis non debet esse seculariter ex transverso partita et consuta circa zonam sed debet esse perpetua et prolixa usque ad talos, vel circiter. Qui in multis impediri vel frequenter egredi habent possunt gestare tunicas aliquanto breviores, quam gestant alii non tamen indecenter breves. Abbas propter equitaoem[3] uti potest tunica brevi. Quilibet alius (dum equitandum est) succingere debet tunicam longiorem : nisi abbas etiam tunicæ brevis usum alieni ad equitandum concesserit. Et abbas equitans, dum utitur brevi tunica (si in loco, ad quem pergit, diu seu pluribus diebus permanendum est) debet habere secum tunicam longiorem, quam processurus in publicum induat. A nullo religiosorum conventualium tunica regularis gestanda est anterius aut posterius aperta, nisi equitatio vel alia

[1] Homines. [2] Piscationem. [3] Equitationem.

caa rationabilis requirat: sed illa claudi debet vel filo, vel fibulis et annulis, seu alio modo convenienti. Supperiores tunicæ novitiorum nondum investitorum sunt apertæ, super quibus non cinguntur. Oportet ut quilibet aliorum in publicum usquam procedens, vel inter homines publice consistens, semper sit cinctus zona super tunicam superiorem seu regularem. Non est licitum ut aliquis portet indumentum subductum serico vel bysso aut sendato, nisi quod ea pars pilei vel capitii itinerarii, quæ ad protegendum faciem aptatur, potest ex superioris licentia subduci sendato, vel alia consimili materia levi, ne facies ledatur. Alumitium regulare, seu capitium panneum potest etiam pellibus agninis nigris et honestis juxta laudabilem consuetudinem subduci. Alia vestimenta quæ apparent, non subducuntur pellibus. Monachis, qui iter facere seu frequenter egredi habent, vel qui alias indigent, concedi possunt caligæ altæ, femora et suprema lumborum circumplectentes vel etiam diploidi conjungendæ, ita tamen ut tales caligæ simpliciter absque cissioris vel zonulis desuper assutis fiant et diplois manicis careant. Etiam tunicellæ, clamides, galeri, pilei, calcei, sandalia, ocreæ, calcaria, ephippia, zonæ, cultelli, sudariola monachorum et alia consimilia, debent carere indecenti curiositate et vitioso ornatu. Chirotecis monachi non debent publice uti in

monasterio, nisi graviores manuum labores requirant. In itinere autem propter aeris intemperiem chirothecis absque curiositate aptatis uti possunt: ita tamen ut, itinere confecto, inter homines constituti eas deponant. Etiam in monasterio et sub actionibus conventualibus manus tegumento panneo et convenienti vestire possunt propter frigus.

17. Nullus religiosorum in lecto nudus quiescere debet, nisi manifesta morbi necessitas compulerit, sed necesse est ut quilibet aut tunicella, aut interula, aut camisia indutus quiescat. Et in monasterio quidem super camisiam aut interulam vel tunicellam quilibet monachorum breve scapulare inducre, seque desuper zona cingere debet, exceptis infirmis vel alias impedimentum patientibus, qui etiam absque scapulari in monasterio quiescere possunt. Nulli etiam monachorum conventualium fas est in monasterio intra loca regularia uti linteaminibus lineis, vel camisia linea, nisi vel infirmitas, aut equitatio seu iter, vel alia necessitas aut ratio requirat: sed alias convenit tam camisias quam linteamina esse staminea aut lanea. Etiam monachi conventuales in monasterio intra ipsa loca regularia lectos habere debent consutitos seu materiales absque plumis, exceptis infirmis seu debilioribus et dispensatione indigentibus. Extra monasterium quilibet quiescere potest, sicut ei libuerit modo non quiescat nudus.

18. Monachi ad vigilias nocturnas, id est ad matutinas excitantur et surgunt ordinarie hora quarta post mediam noctem quando est festum duodecim lectionum ; si res exigere videatur, fit pulsus ad matutinas medio spatio inter tertiam et quartam horas a medio noctis, vel in summis festivitatibus hora tertia.

19. Regularia exercitia sacræ lectionis in mensa conventuali, et post meridiem atque ante completorium diligenter sunt servanda, neque aliter quam sanctæ observantiæ ratio admittit, omitti vel intermitti debent. Nulla ratione monachi teneri debent libros hereticos, damnatos, impudicos, vel alias christianis monachisque prorsus indignos : nisi forte alicui prudenti ad examinandum seu refellendum, pro evidenti utilitate, concessi fuerint ab eo, qui concedere potest.

20. Præter quadragesimam et cetera ecclesiæ jejunia monachi jejunant in monasterio etiam per omnes ferias adventus Domini, et pridie purificationis Dei genitricis, ac pridie ascensionis Domini, et pridie festi corporis Christi, item pridie visitaois nativitatisque ipsius B. Mariæ Virginis, quæ sunt specialia jejunia observantiæ. Etiam jejunant feriis sextis, nisi in illis, festum duodecim lectionum, aut privatus dies solemnis octavæ celebritatem etiam simplicis festi duntaxat habens, jejunio eccle-

siæ diocesanæ non insignitus, vel generalis minutio, hoc est generalis phlebotomia, occurrat. Verum tamen feriis sextis inter nativitatem Dni et Qctavum Epiphaniæ atque inter pascham et Pentecosten occurrentibus, item feria sexta ante primam Dominicam adventus. Et feria sexta ante Dominicam quinquagesimæ non jejunant, nisi jejunium ecclæ vel speciale jejunium observantiæ in eis incidat. Sed et quando præter ipsum ordinarium jejunium feriæ sextæ jejunium tunc omittitur. Abbas quoque, ex speciali gratia potest, si vult, propter causam multum rationabilem et urgentem interdum relaxare toti conventui jejunium feriæ sextæ, ita tamen ut caveat indiscretam facilitatem. Cum adolescentioribus et debilibus, ac cum his qui labore corporali nimium gravantur, abbas misericorditer dispensare consuevit, sicut fuerit necesse.

21. Monachi ab ovis et lacticiniis abstinent secundum consuetudinem ecclesiæ catholicæ vel diocesis in qua vivunt. Omnino tamen convenit servare hanc laudabilem consuetudinem in monasterio, ut tempore jejunii quadragesimalis, etiam si diocesanis forte concedatur usus lacticiniorum, nullus monachorum utatur lacte animalium, nec caseo, nec butyro, absque necessitate seu causa multum rationabili, et superioris speciali permissione, nisi in quibusdam cibis vel liquoribus qui tunc ad refectionem

monachis exhibentur, aliquid butyri permisceatur. Extra monasterium quilibet monachorum conformare se potest in usu lacticiniorum illis fidelibus catholicis, apud quos est, sancta discretione in omnibus servata.

22. A carnibus in monasterio abstinent qui sani sunt omnibus diebus jejuniorum et feriis sextis ac sabbatis, vel aliis diebus, qbus[1] sancta Ecclesia abstinet: item per totum adventum Dni, et feria secunda ac tertia post Dnicam quinquagesimæ: die quoque nativitatis Dni et die paschæ. Alias utantur carnibus sicuti ceteri fideles catholici: nisi quod sabbatis inter nativitatem Dni atque purificaoem beate Marie occurentibus, etiamsi diocesani utantur carnibus, non tamen monachi permittuntur eis uti in monasterio, nisi caa[2] raoabilis et superioris licentia vel presentia singularium hospitum admittat.

23. Abbas, et in absentia abbatis, is qui cum hospitibus ex officio reficere habet propter adventum ipsorum hospitum, potest solvere ordinarium feriæ sextæ jejunium, si non est tunc jejunium ecclesiæ, si aliquos monachos advocaverit ad hospitum mensam, etiam ipsi tale jejunium feriæ sextæ cum charitate solvere possunt in gratiam hospitum, religionis honestate in omnibus servata. In specialibus quoque jejuniis observan-

[1] Quibus. [2] Causa.

tiæ, si abbas vel alii monachi sedent ad mensam cum specialibus hospitibus cœnantibus, licitum est eis (discretione et continentia servata) cœnare; sed abstinent ab usu carnium, nisi ætas vel infirmitas aut presentia hospitum valde singularium aliud permittat. Nam his rationibus intervenientibus, etiam tunc licitum est eis cum timore Dei vesci carnibus, si ipsi hospites et alii diocesani fideles carnibus vescantur. Sic et feria secunda ac tertia post Dominicam quinquagesimæ, item die nativitatis Domini et die paschæ, vel etiam sabbatis quæ inter nativitatem Domini et purificationem B. Marie occurrunt (si diocesis catholica usum carnium tunc admittit) rationibus supradictis intervenientibus carnes in monasterio sicut et alii catholici diocesani edere possunt ceterum extra monasterium quilibet monachorum etiam specialia jejunia observantiæ solvere, et in esu carnium fidelibus catholicis, apud quos est, se conformare potest ad honorem Dei.

24. Provide et diligenter a monachis amputandæ sunt occasiones excedendi in potu vini, ne ipsi a Deo et rebus divinis per incautum ac superfluum vini potum, vel per crapulam elongentur. Vinum quod eis administratur, tali mensura semper administrandum est, ut utilitati corporis et profectui spirituali serviat, non autem spiritum extinguat,

aut internam libertatem et gratiam præpediat. Non debent procurari, nec etiam temere vel nimis facile admitti convivia excessive sumptuosa, et irreligiosa, propter alicujus professionem vel primitias, id est primam missam, nec pro eo quod aliquis qui diu vixit in religione, forte desiderat celebrare jubileum. Imo nec ratione talis jubilei tantum religiosus eximendus ab actionibus conventualibus et laboribus ordinis: sed quisque propter servium vel impotentiam seu quodlibet aliud legitimum impedimentum indiget supportatione sive sit juvenis, sive senex, accipere potest ab abbate misericordiam. Etiam permitti non debet alicui ex monachis conventualibus (excepto abbate) ut certum diem vel dies seu festa per anni circulum eligat aut habeat, in quibus biberes vel relaxationes speciales conventui propter illum exhibeantur. Nulla quoque ratione admittendum est, ut monachi juxta morem secularium quorumdam, occasione festi epiphaniorum, vel quacumque alia occasione (diem in mensa conventuali propter solemnem recreationem seu solemne spatiamentum intermittatur lectio), regem eligant ad celebrandum convivium. Hæc enim et quælibet aliæ consimiles vanæ et pravæ consuetudines monasterii sanctitati minime convenire noscuntur.

25. Hospites honesti, et precipue religiosi cujuscumque ordinis sint, venientes ad monaster-

ium, debent omni tempore, quantum fieri potest benigne et cum charitate recipi, ut per amicam et puram sanctæ hospitalitatis exhibitionem glorificetur Deus.

26. Abbas potest concedere quod de biennio in biennium quilibet monachus sacerdos visitet parentes et amicos suos: alias istud non est permittendum absque necessitate vel causa multum rationabili; nisi quis forte cum abbate egrediente proficisceretur, vel ad negotia mitteretur, aut nisi abbas specialem gratiam alicui exhibere vellet. Nuptiis et dedicationibus secularibus non licet monachis sub obedientia superioris in monasterio viventibus interesse, nisi forte casu superveniant, ubi illæ celebrantur, vel certe necessitas seu magna et evidens utilitas exposcat ut illis intersint. Hi qui extra monasterium sunt, summa diligentia sibi attendere debent, ne dictis, factis, gestibus, levitatibus, dissolutionibus atque incompositionibus morum aliquem scandalizent, aut opprobrium sacræ religioni faciant. Semper et ubique abstinere debent ab indisciplinata audacia et malo exemplo, atque a ludis turbulentis et indecentibus, vel alias ipsis prohibitis. Cavere debet superior ne monachis solatia externarum recreationum vel libertatum amplius vel aliter concedat, quam convenit.

27. Nullus post investitionem vel susceptionem

habitus monastici mitti facile extra monasterium debet ad discendas litteras vel scientias, nisi locus in quo habitaturus esset, habeat congregationem secundum exigentiam status monastici laudabiliter viventem. Si aliquis novitius omnino illitteratus fuerit receptus, abbas procurare debet, ut talis a magistro religioso vel seculari instituatur in litteris competenter, ut cum ceteris possit suo tempore utiliter vacare seu intendere sacræ lectioni. Quod si hoc non curaverit Abbas, ubi jam venerit tempus professionis, monachi consentire non debent, ut novitius prorsus illitteratus et non idoneus profiteatur. Et abbas non debet admittere, vel suscipere aliquem ad professionem absque consensu totius conventus vel majoris partis ejusdem. Ad evitanda pericula animarum nullus admittitur ad professionem ante annum ætatis suæ vigesimum. Nullus etiam mittitur ad sacrum presbyteratus ordinem suscipiendum, ante annum ætatis suæ vigesimum octavum, nisi necessitas compellat aut grandis causa requirat.

28. Religiosi ordines et loca sua in congregatione habere ac tenere debent secundum tempus, quo ipsi ingrediuntur et suscipiuntur ad investitionem, ita ut, is qui hodie habitu religionis investitur, precedat illum qui crastina investietur, nisi altiori consilio, seu ex causa multum rationabili abbas aliquando

aliud ordinet. Sane qui assumitur ad presidentiam, præcedere debet alios, quibus præponitur, etiamsi post eos fuerit investitus: et sacerdotes præcedere debent diaconos, diaconi subdiaconos, subdiaconi non constitutos in sacris ordinibus.

29. Si aliquis superbiat propter locum aut ordinem suum, despiciens inferiores, vel contumeliose eis insultans, superior sicut judicaverit esse expediens debet talem dejicere a suo loco et ordine: vel alio modo absque indiscreta dissimulatione districte punire. Similiter qui, deposita humilitate monastica, factis aut verbis, contentiose, superbe, ac presumptuose erga superiorem se habuerit, et qui alium humiliter vel pie viventem, aut quodlibet officium seu opus ex obedientia peragentem, appellaverit hypocritam, vel alio modo eum subsannaverit, seu irriserit, et qui inter alios malignas discordias ex proposito seminaverit vel alios ad turbationes iniquas, seu ad rebellionem, aut impugnationem sacræ observantiæ excitaverit; item qui aliquem convitiis impetere, propriave auctoritate cedere, vel alicui minari aut verba aliqua turpia, inhonesta, scandalosa, irreligiosa, atque a modestia et verecundia monastica prorsus aliena, serio vel etiam per jocum proloqui presumpserit, omnino gravi vindictæ subjici debet, si quis heresim tenere, vel aliquem ad hereticum dogma sollicitare non

erubuerit, statim separetur ab aliis et in carcere recludatur.

30. Particularem pecuniam sive parvam, sive magnam non solum non recipere, sed nec tenere vel petere ab amicis, aut quibuscumque aliis per se, vel per alium aliquis attentare debet, nisi permiserit superior. Monacho alibi constituto, ubi superior non est presens, a quo licentia petatur, si ultro offeratur particularis aliqua pecunia, ipse quidem (si periculum scandali non imminet) eam suscipere præter, non tamen extra evidentis necessitatis articulum illam petere debet, nisi precesserit expressius superioris consensus. Quod si oblatam susceperit, omnino superiori manifestare, et eam voluntati ejus committere debet, ubi ipsum superiorem presentem habere potuerit. Et superior vel alius jussu aut permissione superioris illam tenere debet: nec relinquenda est in potestate seu arbitrio illius, cui oblata vel data fuit. Non solum autem pecuniam, sed et quælibet alia magni momenti vel pretii prohibentur monachi ad particulares usus ab amicis vel externis extra necessitatis articulum petere absque superioris permissione contra cujus consensum nullus monachus potest aliquid retinere. Nulla vero ratione superiori licitum est concedere ut aliquis monachorum suorum aliquid teneat, aut possideat tamquam proprium.

31. Nulli monachorum licet pastoralis curæ officium in sæculo acceptare, nisi ad hoc pro bono ecclesiæ sanctæ evocatus fuerit, et summus pontifex permiserit. Non sunt temere alendi nimis multi canes in monasterio, et monachis non est licitum dare operam venationibus, vel se in illis occupare. Et abbas prohibere debet ne pro se vel pro monasterio aliquis ex suis famulis canes venaticas aut aves venaticas ad venationes et aucupia frequentanda teneat intra septa monasterii. Licet monachi prohibeantur suscipere aliquem ex sacro fonte Baptismi, abbas tamen, dum a singularibus personis rogatur, solet nonnunquam pro bono charitatis et pacis acquiescere, ita tamen ut neque compatrem, neque commatrem appellet parentes prolis a se susceptæ. Etiam abbas ab antiquo benedicit corporalia, et quælibet vestimenta, lintea, ac vasa ecclesiastica, præter calicem et patenam.

32. Quando per electionem providendum est monasterio de abbate, congregao debet eligere virum ætatis legitimæ, moribus gravem, non penitus illitteratum, professum, in sacris ordinibus constitutum, et alias idoneum qui ad tale officium assumi, et ipsum exsequi possit. Sive autem per scrutinium, sive per compromissum fiat canonica abbatis electio, electores antequam procedant ad electionem, debent confiteri, communicare, et prestare juramentum,

manu super librum sacrorum evangeliorum posita, in hunc modum, videlicet: "Ego talis juro, et promitto omnipotenti Deo ac talibus sanctis hujus monasterii patronis, illum eligere quem credam futurum ecclesiæ in spiritualibus et temporalibus utiliorem, nec illi vocem dare, quem verisimiliter scivero promissione aut datione alicujus rei temporalis, seu prece per se aut per alium interposita aut alias qualitercumque directe, vel indirecte pro se electionem procurare, ita me Deus adjuvet, et hæc sancta Dei evangelia." Et propterea quando ipsa canonica abbatis electio fit per viam scrutinii, si servatis premissis, et aliis servandis, vota omnium non concordant in unum, sed dividuntur in plures, is in quem pars capitularium vocem in electione habentium major numero consenserit, si talis est qui eligi possit, merito censeri debet esse electus a majori et saniori parte, ita ut (ad infinita difficultatum impedimenta vitanda) non sit ulterius necesse exquirere seu facere collationem, quis eorum qui electi fuerunt, sit majoris meriti, vel quæ pars eligentium habuerit inter eligendum meliorem zelum. Ad electionem abbatis faciendam, non est necesse vocare illos absentes monachos, qui commode et absque singulari detrimento vel gravamine monasterii seu congregais vocari non possunt, et qui in locis ultra duas dictas a monasterio distan-

tibus existunt. Non professi, et professi non constituti saltem in ordine subdiaconatus, vocem non habent in electione abbatis.

33. Abbas, prior et superior ejusdem monasterii solicite cavere tenentur quisque (pro exigentia officii sui), ne per ipsorum negligentiam, regularis disciplina in aliquo diminuatur: sane eorum specialiter interest procurare, ut divinum officium, tam nocturnum quam diurnum, et quidquid conventualiter cantari aut legi debet, decenter, monastice et perfecte cum convenientibus punctis seu respiraoibus,[1] et absque irreligiosa verborum aut sillabarum precipitae, omni tempore cantetur et legatur: et ut in locis regularibus debita quies, tranquillitas atque disciplina semper servetur, utque omnes de congregaoc ab omni peculii vel proprietatis labe, ab omni potationum commessationumque excessu, ab omni dissolutionum et levitatum indecentia alieni, spiritualiter et exemplariter, juxta status monastici exigentiam conversentur, et nullatenus recedant ab honestate, modestia, religiositate, puritate et perfectione, quæ in regula ac statutis continentur; sed omnia ad sanctam observantiam spectantia, magna diligentia ubique retinere satagant, et ceremonias monasticas in divinis, non singuli

[1] Respirationibus.

diversimodo, sed omnes[1] uniformiter sicut convenit custodiant.

34. Abbas et tota congregatio in omnibus se sanctæ matris ecclesiæ correctioni, sedisque apostolicæ directioni ac judicio humili et obedienti cordis inclinatione semper submittere debent et submittunt per nos approbari. Quare pro parte moderni abbatis nobis fuit humiliter supplicatum, ut eidem vivendi modo robur apostolicæ confirmaois adiicere, aliasque in premissis opportune providere de benignitate apostolica dignaremur, Nos igitur, qui monasteriorum quorumlibet, et personarum in illis Domino famulantium salubrem directionem et prosperum successum sinceris desideramus affectibus, hujusmodi supplicationibus inclinati predictum vivendi modum, ac omnia et singula alia in illius tenore hujusmodi contenta, apostolica auctoritate tenore presentium, ex certa scientia, approbamus et confirmamus, ac plena roboris firmitate subsistere, suosque plenarios effectus sortiri, et ab omnibus quos illa concernunt, perpetuo inviolabiliter observari debere, sicque per quoscumque judices et commissarios quavis auctoritate, jungentes, etiam causarum palatii apostolici auditores in quavis causa et instantia judicari et definiri debere, ac si secus super his a quoquam quavis auctoritate scienter vel

[1] Omnes.

ignoranter contigerit attentari, irritum et inane decernimus.

Nec non prefato moderno et pro tempore existenti ipsius monasterii abbati, ut, per se, vel suos in suo monasterio vices gerentes, omnes et singulos tam professos quam non professos monachos predicti monasterii, ac alias quacumque personas conventuales, spirituali ipsius abbatis jurisdictioni subjectas ab omnibus et singulis eorum peccatis, criminibus et delictis, ac quibusvis excommunicationis, suspensionis et interdicti, aliisque ecclesiasticis sententiis, censuris et pœnis a jure vel ab homine quavis occasione vel causa latis, etiam dictæ sedi reservatis (non tamen hæreseos, de qua qui sententialiter condemnatus fuerit, conspirationis, vel manifestæ inobedientiæ seu rebellionis in romanum pontificem pro tempore existentem, aut sedem eamdem, falsificationis bullarum aut litterarum apostolicarum, vel delationis armorum et aliorum prohibitorum ad partes infidelium) quoties opus fuerit (in foro conscientiæ tantum) absolvere, et eis pro commissis penitentiam salutarem injungere, necnon cum monachis, et aliis, et (ut præfertur) subjectis super quibuscumque irregularitatibus ex quovis excessu, etiam per simoniam ante vel post religionis ingressum contractis dispensare: ac pro se presbyterum idoneum regularem vel secularem, qui

eum ab ejus peccatis, criminibus et delictis ac sententiis, censuris et pœnis prædictis etiam (ut prefertur) reservatis (non tamen casibus supra exceptis) quoties opus fuerit (in foro conscientiæ tantum) absolvat, ac sibi pro commissis debitam pœnitentiam salutarem injungat, nec non secum super irregularitatibus prædictis (ut prefertur) dispenset, ac cum eodem abbate omnia quæ ipse cum monachis suis predictis quoad forum poli facere et exercere potest, faciat et exerceat, eligere possit. Quodque tempore interdicti ordinaria auctoritate promulgati, liceat monachis et aliis personis conventualibus ecclesiasticæ ipsius abbatis jurisdictioni subditis, nec non eorum domesticis, qui ejusmodi interdicto causam non dederint, in suis et aliorum ad quæ devenerint locis tali interdicto suppositis, missas et alia quælibet divina officia, clausis januis, excommunicatis et interdictis prorsus exclusis, non pulsatis campanis, et submissa voce celebrare, et dum ab aliis celebrantur, interesse, et ecclesiastica sacramenta recipere et (si eos inibi decedere contingat) eorum cadavera ecclesiasticæ sepulturæ tradi possint, dicta auctoritate apostolica, tenore presentium de speciali gratia concedimus et indulgemus.

Et insuper quod nullus episcopus vel archiepiscopus aut sedis prefatæ legatus (etiam de latere

celebrationem divinorum in ecclesia dicti monasterii suspendere possit. Quodque de cetero monachi, qui communem et approbatam ipsius monasterii reformationem per expressum consensum non acceptaverint, antequam illam acceptent, in electione abbatis ejusdem monasterii pro tempore facienda, aut in quibuscumque aliis tractatibus capitularibus, vocem necessario non habeant, ab aliis tamen monachis, qui reformationem prædictam acceptaverint, debitis charitate, honore et reverentia tractentur, illisque debitus ordinis locus (dum cum ipsis erunt) concedatur, authoritate apostolica et tenore prædictis perpetuo statuimus et ordinamus, non obstantibus apostolicis, ac (in provincialibus et synodalibus concisis editis) specialibus vel generalibus constitutionibus et ordinationibus, nec non monasterii et ordinis prædictorum (juramento, confirmatione apostolica, vel quavis firmitate alia roboratis) statutis et consuetudinibus, cæterisque contrariis quibuscumque. Nulli ergo omnino hominum liceat, hanc paginam nostræ approbationis, confirmationis, decreti concessionis, indulti, statuti et ordinationis infringere vel ei ausu temerario contra ire. Si quis autem hoc attentare presumpserit, indignationem omnipotentis Dei, ac beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum ejus se noverit incursurum. Datum Romæ, apud sanctum Petrum, anno incar-

nationis Dominicæ, millesimo, quingentesimo, quadragesimo quinto, sexto idus aprilis, pontificatus nostri anno undecimo.

Ita est in litteris originalibus in pargameno scriptis et sigillo plombeo suspenso, continente effigiem sancti Petri et Pauli cum inscriptione ab altera parte : Paulus papa III^us^. Teste me Notario hac 10^ma^ *februarii anni millesimi sexcentesimi quinquagesimi sexti. Test.*

Signé : HERMAN, *not. r.*

Præcedens copia collata cum suo originali in pergameno scripto et sigillato concordat de verbo ad verbum ut testantur feodales comitatus Hannonice, presente etiam notario suprascripto hac 10 *die februarii* 1656. *Testes :*

Signé: PETIT, 1656. DELPLANCQ.

NOTE IV.

EXEMPLAR EPISTOLÆ VENERABILIS ET SANCTÆ MEMORIÆ D. LUDOVICI BLOSII AD S. IGNATIUM SOCIETATIS JESU GENERALEM.

Gratia et pax Christi nobiscum.

CUM jam olim, R^de^ in Christo pater, partim relatu patrum Societatis Vestræ qui hisce in regionibus versantur, partim lectione quorumdam scriptorum mihi ab iisdem communicatorum, compertum haberem quantos fructus non in Italia modo et Sicilia aut Hispania ; sed in exteris quoque et longe dissitis regionibus, hactenus peperit atque etiam nunc pariat eadem sancta societas vestra, dici imo credi non potest quantopere desiderarim aliquando ad has etiam partes destinari prædictæ societatis vestræ patres, fratresque complures qui tum vitæ bonæ odore, tum Verbi Dei prædicatione nostratium torporem excitarent, et ad sincerum Christi (cui tota et militia jam dicta societas vestra) cultum allicerent et amorem. Acuit autem nostrum hoc desiderium Lovanii, Tornacique degentium patrum presentia qui, licet numero paucissimi sint, tamen in vinea Domini

excolenda quam strenuam navant operam. Tam conatum eorum non destituit successus, in tantum ut vel sola eorum fama per multi ad meliorem redeant mentem Christique suave jugum subeant. Quorumquidem patrum si major esset numerus, omnino in spem bonam adducor fore ut brevi nobis videre contingat haud mediocrem ecclesiæ reformationem, non in ecclesiasticis solum sed in sæcularibus quoque tum plebeis, tum nobilibus. Cæterum quoniam messis multa est et tam pauci operarii pares esse haud quamquam possunt tantis laboribus exhauriendis, quos alioqui requirere videtur plerisque in locis tantum non prostrata Domini vinea quam aper de sylva et singularis ferus de pascere non cessat; visum est mihi paucis R^dam^ P^em^ V^am^ compellare et tuum meo, tum aliorum quorumdam religiosorum virorum nomine, eamdem Pat^em^ V^am^ orare et obsecrare in Domino ut quam præstitit diligentiam in cæteris Christo lucrifaciendis regionibus, eam quoque istis nostris impendere dignetur, plures in ecclesiæ ædificationem patres et fratres huc transmittendo quos olim non sine fœnore et multo auctiore numero (ut confidimus auxiliante Domino) recipere possit. Hoc facto et Deum sibi demerebitur Paternitas Vestra et nos omnes sibi plurimum devinctos habebit; quandoquidem nobis nihil jam prius in

votis est, quam ut in dies crescat vere fidelium numerus et plures ex ipsis inferni faucibus eripiantur. Quodquidem, cooperante gratia Dei, hac quam diximus ratione commodissime fieri posse existimamus. His valeat multum in Christo R^da^ P^tas^ Vestra cujus precibus sacrificiisque sacrosanctis meosque omnes etiam atque etiam commendo. Lætiis e monasterio nostro postridie Cinerum 1556.

Eidem R^de^ P^ti^ V^re^ deditissimus,

LUDOVICUS BLOSIUS.

Monasterii Lætiensis abbas immeritus.

(Liber quintus, etc., de Liessies, f° 520 r°.)

NOTE V.

IN 1793 a greedy and sacrilegious mob attacked the church of Liessies, and forced its guardians to surrender to them the shrine and bust of St. Hiltrude, which masterpieces of art they proceeded to hack into small pieces with the hammers, chisels, and pincers with which they were armed. It is impossible to read, without a shudder of disgust and indignation, the deed in which the 143 pounds three quarters and two ounces of silver, which this impious vandalism produced, are enumerated, piece by piece, one article after another.

The church's possessions, sold in 1791 and in 1792, did but pass through the hands of the first of these spoliators, who nearly all died soon afterwards, either in misery or overtaken by misfortune. A terrible punishment struck the first delinquent who began the pillage of the church: he fell from the height of the ceiling, and his skull was dashed to pieces, close to the tomb of Louis de Blois. An inhabitant of Wallers en Fayne, of the name of Jouniaux, bought all that was left of the Abbey and its dependencies for a miserable sum, and demolished the greater

part of it, in order to sell the iron, wood, and stone, of which the buildings were composed; the very tombs were ransacked and profaned. Jouniaux, who, like the rest, was to meet with a miserable end, parted with his bargain afterwards to an apostate, of the name of Dahiez. The latter, having accomplished the work of destruction, continued to live alone in the Abbot's quarters. There he lived, poor in the midst of his riches, clothed in rags, and suffering from all the inclemencies of the winds and seasons. When a window was torn off and carried away by the wind, Dahiez would patch up the opening with some panel of wood which he picked up in the garrets, on which traces were often still to be seen of the paintings which had covered them. Thus he lived on till the year 1834, and his miserable existence was looked upon by all as a fitting punishment for his crime.

M. Charles L'homme, at this present time, inhabits what was formerly the Monastic Infirmary, which is all that is now left of what once was the magnificent Abbey of Liessies, now known by the name of the *Chateau de la Mothe.* Here M. L'homme has gathered together, in one of his rooms, books, manuscripts, pictures, objects of art, and a Monastic Ritual, formerly belonging to the Abbey—waifs and strays, which the Revolutionary tempests have

scattered, one here, and one there, and which it has been his pious care to bring together again.

All the rest has been destroyed or dispersed: the parish church affords shelter to five pictures, certain ornaments in velvet and satin are at Solre-le-Château, the altar is at Froid-Chapelle, the chimes at Avesnes, the columns of the gallery at the *Chateau* of Pont-de-Sains; perhaps some other painting, statues, or reliquaries may also have been saved from destruction, but having passed from hand to hand, having been sold at a distance, they now belong to collectors of curiosities, who do not even so much as know that these are the last remaining fragments of the once splendid and powerful Abbey of Liessies (M. L'abbé Dehaisnes).

A. KING AND CO., PRINTERS, ABERDEEN.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018